

**DOCTRINALISING DREAMS:
PATRISTIC VIEWS OF THE NATURE OF DREAMS
AND THEIR RELATION TO EARLY CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES**

BY

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Declaration

I declare that I have composed *Doctrinalising Dreams: Patristic Views of the Nature of Dreams and Their Relation to Early Christian Doctrines*, and that it is my own work and that it has not been submitted in whole or in part for any other degree or professional qualification.

Lien-Yueh Wei

Abstract

Modern scholarship has generated several works on ancient Greco-Roman, Jewish or biblical oneirology, whereas it has never resulted in a book or monograph devoted solely to the study of patristic oneirology. Although many articles discuss the dreams in patristic texts, most of their authors do not analyse these dreams correctly in their doctrinal context, a context from which virtually all patristic dream narratives or discourses emerged. This thesis endeavours to remedy the deficiency in the construction of patristic views of dreams by a corresponding analytic approach.

Numerous early Christian writers attempted to formulate a Christian dream theory, conceptualise dream phenomena, or interpret their own dreams or the dreams of prominent figures. This thesis argues that from their perspective, the nature of human-inspired dreams can be conceived of as creations of the soul, as indicators of the dreamer's state and as moral reflection (Ch.1 to 3), that of demon-inspired dreams as demonic assault, temptation and deception (Ch.4) and finally that of divinely-inspired dreams as a site of epiphany, as divine messages and as the dynamic of faith reinforcement (Ch.5 to 7). In addition to investigating their thoughts on dreams, additional discussions of Greco-Roman, Jewish and biblical dream traditions will be provided as helpful references for readers to understand the background in which patristic oneirology was shaped and cultivated (Appendixes).

Moreover, unlike pagan authors, these Christian writers did not elucidate dreams for oneirological, physiological or psychological purposes. Rather, their real agenda was to promulgate Christian doctrines, including the doctrines of man, asceticism, sin, demonology, God, Christology, revelation and eschatology. When they encountered dreams, they not only interpreted but doctrinalised them, just as they did to many other aspects of human life. Methodologically, they dogmatically expounded dreams so as to facilitate their dissemination of the doctrines. The making of patristic oneirology was essentially the propagation of dogmatics. Hermeneutically, they integrated doctrinal tenets into their explication of dreams. The doctrines defined the essence of dreams and even orientated their mission outside the dream world. Accordingly, their oneirological and doctrinal conceptions were intertwined and serve each other. This doctrinalised oneirology marked the birth of a new ideology of dreams in late antiquity.

Hence, in each chapter the methodological and hermeneutical relationships between dreams and the related doctrine in patristic texts will be demonstrated. Due to these relationships, this thesis contends that the task of penetrating patristic views of dreams cannot be accomplished without analysing them in their doctrinal context; meanwhile, the doctrines cannot be fully represented without undertaking that task.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------|--|
| <i>ACW</i> | <i>Ancient Christian Writers</i> . Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1946-67; NY: Newman Press, 1970-. |
| <i>AHI</i> | <i>Augustinian Historical Institute: Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century</i> . Ed. by John Rotelle. N.Y.: New City Press. |
| <i>AHR</i> | <i>American Historical Review</i> |
| <i>AJP</i> | <i>American Journal of Philology</i> |
| <i>AJSR</i> | <i>Association for Jewish Studies Review</i> , Cambridge, MA: 1976-. |
| <i>ANF</i> | <i>The Ante Nicene Fathers. Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325</i> . 9 Vols. Eds. by Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson. Grand Rapids, M.I.: W. B. Eerdmanns, 1882-1890, reprint, 1989. |
| <i>ANRW</i> | <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt</i> |
| <i>ASTI</i> | <i>Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute</i> . Leiden: Brill, 1962-1983. |
| <i>ATR</i> | <i>Anglican Theological Review</i> |
| <i>BA</i> | <i>Bibliothèque Augustinienne</i> . Paris: Declée de Brouwer, 1936-. |
| <i>BHM</i> | <i>Bulletin of the History of Medicine</i> |
| <i>BZ</i> | <i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i> |
| <i>CB</i> | <i>Classical Bulletin</i> |
| <i>CCL</i> | <i>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</i> . Turnholti: Brepols, 1953-. |
| <i>CE</i> | <i>Catholic Encyclopedia</i> . NY: Encyclopedia Press, 1914; <i>New Catholic Encyclopedia</i> . 2nd edition. MI, Farmington Hill: Gale Thomson, 2003. |
| <i>CH</i> | <i>Church History</i> |
| <i>CHR</i> | <i>Catholic Historical Review</i> |
| <i>CQ</i> | <i>Classical Quarterly</i> |

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|---------------|--|
| <i>CR</i> | <i>Classical Review</i> |
| <i>CSCO</i> | <i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i> . Louvain: [various imprints] 1903-. |
| <i>CSEL</i> | <i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> . Vienna: [various imprints], 1866-. |
| <i>CSLP</i> | <i>Corpus Scriptorum Latinorum Paravianum</i> . Turin: Paravia, 1922-. |
| <i>CTM</i> | <i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i> |
| <i>EHR</i> | <i>English Historical Review</i> |
| <i>FC</i> | <i>The Fathers of the Church</i> . A New Translation. NY: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1949-60; Washington. D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1962-. |
| <i>GCS</i> | <i>Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller</i> (or <i>CB</i> , <i>Corpus Berolinense</i>). Berlin: Th. Mommsen, 1903-. |
| <i>HR</i> | <i>History of Religions</i> |
| <i>HSM</i> | <i>Harvard Semitic Monographs</i> |
| <i>HTR</i> | <i>Harvard Theological Review</i> |
| <i>JECS</i> | <i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i> |
| <i>JHMAS</i> | <i>Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Science</i> |
| <i>JQR</i> | <i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i> |
| <i>JR</i> | <i>Journal of Religion</i> |
| <i>JRS</i> | <i>Journal of Roman Studies</i> |
| <i>JSJSup</i> | <i>Supplements to Journal for the Study of Judaism</i> |
| <i>JSPSup</i> | <i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i> Supplement Series |
| <i>JTS</i> | <i>Journal of Theological Studies</i> |
| <i>LCC</i> | <i>Library of Christian Classics</i> . Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1953-1966. |

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|---------------|--|
| <i>LF</i> | <i>Library of the Fathers</i> |
| <i>LCL</i> | <i>Loeb Classical Library</i> . Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973-. |
| <i>MA</i> | <i>Medium Aevum</i> |
| <i>MGH</i> | <i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptorum</i> . Digital Edition. German: Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, 2004. |
| <i>NPNF</i> | <i>A Selected Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> . First and Second Series. 14 Vols. Ed. by Philip Schaff. Grand Rapids, M.I.: Eerdmanns, 1886-1890, reprint, 1989. |
| <i>NRSV</i> | <i>New Revised Standard Version: The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Deuterocanonical Books</i> . Ed. by M.D. Coogan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, third edition, 2001. |
| <i>NovT</i> | <i>Novum Testamentum</i> |
| <i>NTApoc</i> | <i>New Testament Apocrypha</i> . Ed. by W. Schneemelcher. Louisville: WJK, 2003. |
| <i>OTP</i> | <i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . 2 Vols. Ed. by J.H. Charlesworth. N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983-1985. |
| <i>PG</i> | <i>Patrologia Graeca</i> . Paris: Migne, 1857-66. |
| <i>PL</i> | <i>Patrologia Latina</i> . Paris: Migne, 1844-65. |
| <i>PO</i> | <i>Patrologia Orientalis</i> . Paris: Firmin-Didot and Brepols, 1904-. |
| <i>PPR</i> | <i>Philosophy and Phenomenological Research</i> |
| <i>PS</i> | <i>Patrologia Syriaca</i> . Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1894-1907. |
| <i>PTS</i> | <i>Patristische Texte und Studien</i> . Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1964-. |
| <i>PVTG</i> | <i>Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece</i> . Leiden: Brill, 1967. |
| <i>SAEMO</i> | <i>Sancti Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolandensis Opera</i> . Milan: Biblioteca Ambrosiana; Rome: Citta' Nuova Editrice, 1989. |
| <i>SAR</i> | <i>South Atlantic Review</i> |
| <i>SBLSP</i> | <i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Paper Series</i> |

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|----------------|---|
| <i>SC</i> | <i>Sources Chrétiennes</i> . Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1941-. |
| <i>SecCent</i> | <i>Second Century</i> |
| <i>SBLSS</i> | <i>Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series</i> |
| <i>SP</i> | <i>Studia Patristica</i> |
| <i>SPAW</i> | <i>Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften</i> |
| <i>TAPA</i> | <i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i> |
| <i>TDNT</i> | <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Ed. by Gerhard Friedrich. Trans. by Geoffrey Bromiley. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-76. |
| <i>TU</i> | <i>Texte und Untersuchungen</i> . Leipzig, J.C. Hinrich'sche Buchhandlung, 1882-1943; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1951-. |
| <i>VC</i> | <i>Vigiliae Christianae</i> |

Introduction

We are bound to expound at this point what is the opinion of Christians respecting dreams.

— Tertullian, *De Anima*, 45.1

1. The Absence of Christian Oneirology

People spend more than one-third of their lifetime sleeping. The only activity they can perceive in sleeping is dreaming. Everyone dreams. Dreaming and dreams are daily experiences for all. Most Christians in their lives spend more time in dreaming than in praying and reading the Bible.

Besides life and death, dreams are a third state of human existence. Like the living world, the world of dreams is one visited by everybody, everyday. Like the afterlife, dreams may preoccupy everyone. The phenomena experienced in dreams can be more mysterious and compelling than those in life, and more perceptible and comprehensible than those in death and the afterlife. However, unlike the issues of life and death, dreams have not yet been treated seriously enough by contemporary theologians.

In the twentieth century, following the lead of Sigmund Freud, the investigation of dreams reached a climax. Oneirology (from the Greek *ὄνειρολογία*, indicating the study of dreams or the ideas and beliefs about dreams) became one of the most popular disciplines of the time. Yet, this fervour did not uncover the holistic

dimensions of dreams. On the contrary, the dominant oneirology, based on Freud's theory, deconstructed the profound value and meanings of the dimensions other than psychological and physiological ones, such as theological or supernatural dimensions.¹ This modern oneirology can be essentially seen as a movement towards desacralising and demysticising dreams. The religious aspect of dreams has virtually been ignored or disparaged in this movement.²

Influenced by modern oneirology, numerous Christians, including theologians, believe that one's dream is derived from one's unconscious activity or brain. Dreams

¹ The psychological view of dreams is the dominant and prevailing view in contemporary oneirology. The main idea of this view is that all dreams result from the function of human unconsciousness. This view is based on the dream theory of Freud, who asserts, "[we] have sought to express the nature of dreams: a dream is a (disguised) fulfillment of a (suppressed and repressed) wish." According to Freud, apart from conscious functions, human beings have an unconscious system. Because most of our wishes, especially suppressed and repressed sexual desires, cannot be realised in our daily lives, the function of unconsciousness is to fulfill them in dreams. Therefore, dreams have nothing to do with demons, the divine, prediction, mystery, or miracle. Dreams reflect only human desires, having no connection with the religious world. Sigmund Freud, *Die Traumdeutung* (Leipzig und Wien, F. Deuticke, 1900); English Translation: *The Interpretation of Dream*. Trans. by James Strachey (NY: Avon Books, 1965, reprint, 1998), 156-161, 192-194, 262, and 311-340.

² John Macquarrie states that Freud's theory accounts for religious phenomena "in terms of factors immanent within man's mental life without positing any supernatural or even transhuman factor at work." Freud's theory shows that "religious attitudes and beliefs originate at least in part, to satisfy certain needs....[religion] as the last stronghold of the pleasure principle, providing us with an illusion that promises satisfaction and shield us from the harshness of reality." "[For] Freud and those who follow him tell us that all our ideas of God,...are illusions." John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1966), 25 and 44. Louis Dupré marks Freud's anti-religious theory as oversimplified "psychologism." He writes that "univocity of meaning" in the interpretation of dreams is Freud's fundamental error. Louis Dupré, *The Other Dimension: A Search for the Meaning of Religious Attitudes* (NY: Doubleday, 1972), 86 and 161. Carl Jung sees Freud's theory essentially as not only demolishing traditional religions, but replacing them with a new concealed religion. Jung remarks, "Freud, who had always made much of his irreligiosity, had now constructed a dogma; or rather, in the place of a jealous God...he had substituted another compelling image, that of sexuality....The advantage of this transformation for Freud was, apparently, that he was able to regard the new numinous principle as scientifically irreproachable and free from all religious taint." Carl G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. Ed. Aniela Jaffe (NY: Vintage Books, 1965), 151. Paul Ricoeur also regards Freud's interpretation as exclusive, rather than exhaustive. He points out, "Freud is an *Aufklärer*, a man of the Enlightenment. His rationalism and, as he says himself, his lack of belief are not the fruit but the presupposition of his interpretation of religious illusion, and he considers his interpretation to be exhaustive....[But] psychoanalysis has no access to problems of radical origin because its point of view is economic and only economic." Paul Ricoeur, *Le Conflit des Interprétations: Essais d'herméneutique* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1969); English Translation: *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*. Ed. by Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974, reprint, 2007), 145. Additionally, Ricoeur has offered probably the most comprehensive critique of Freud's theory through his work *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*. Trans. by Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 65-178.

reflect only the dreamer's unconscious desires.³ The nature of dreams has only psychological or physiological meaning, without respect to Christian faith. The interpretation of dreams and the explanation of oneiric⁴ function or phenomena are tasks which belong to science, rather than to religion. In effect, dreams have been excluded from the concerns of theologians, and oneirology from the field of theology.⁵

On the other hand, some Christians have reprimanded the secularising trend of understanding dreams in the modern Christian community. For example, in the last section of his last work *Man and His Symbols*,⁶ Carl Jung argues that:

In spite of the fact that the Catholic Church admits the occurrence of *somnia a Deo missa* (dreams sent by God), most of its thinkers make no serious attempt to understand dreams. I doubt whether there is a Protestant treatise or doctrine that would stoop so low as to admit the possibility that the *vox Dei* might be perceived in a dream. But if a theologian really believes in God, by what authority does he suggest that God is unable to speak through dreams?⁷

Many Christians may totally reject Freud's hypothesis and agree with Jung's view. Nevertheless, they would experience considerable difficulty in finding a dream

³ Christians, like other people, are strongly influenced by Freud in part when we think of, or talk about, dreams. Steven Kruger observes: "We have learned to read our night-time experiences psychologically, as expressions of our intimate thoughts and desires... We have largely followed Freud in his suggestion that the dream is the 'royal road to...the unconscious.'" Steven F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, reprint, 2005), 1.

⁴ The word "oneiric" denotes "of or pertaining to dreams."

⁵ Morton Kelsey asserts, "In [modern] theological circles the subject of dreams and their interpretation was dead and buried." Morton Kelsey, *God, Dreams, and Revelation: A Christian Interpretation of Dreams* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1974, reprint, 1991), 7.

⁶ This work was undertaken by Jung himself in the last year of his life before his death in 1961. As John Freeman, the editor of *Man and His Symbols*, testifies, "The last year of his life was devoted almost entirely to this book, and when he died in June 1961, his own section was complete (he finished it, in fact, only some 10 days before his final illness) and his colleagues' chapters had all been approved by him in draft." John Freeman, "Introduction to *Man and His Symbols*," in Carl G. Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (NY: Dell, 1968), viii.

⁷ Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, 93.

theory in modern times that can be identified as Christian and can correspond to Christian faith and its tradition.⁸ In fact, since Freud's *Die Traumdeutung* (*The Interpretation of Dreams*) was published in 1900, theologians have not yet proposed any coherent theory of dreams, despite some of them having offered radical critiques of Freud's theory.⁹

Hans-Georg Gadamer observes, "Modern theory is a tool of construction by means of which we gather experiences together in a unified way and make it possible to dominate them."¹⁰ If Gadamer's observation is correct, then the lack of a Christian dream theory indicates that the oneiric lives or experiences of contemporary Christians are manipulated in some way, and to some degree, by modern dominant oneirology.

In addition, the absence of a dream theory signifies the destitution of a dream language (or an oneirological language), and vice versa. Language is not merely a tool for communication. Rather, it is a "being" that conveys meaning and information (or "historical prejudices" and "historically effected consciousness," to use Gadamer's terms) already existing— or more precisely, established— in it.¹¹ A language is a medium where a Christian and a world (and everything within it)

⁸ In this thesis, "a dream theory" signifies a systematic or comprehensive explanation of dream phenomena, etiology (sources), epistemology, ontology, and teleology, as well as methods (or a method) for interpreting them. Modern psychology and neurophysiology have proposed their own dream theories while modern theology has yet to do so.

⁹ For theological critiques of Freud's theory, see Kelly Bulkeley, *The Wilderness of Dreams: Exploring the Religious Meanings of Dreams in Modern Western Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 81-131. Hans Küng, *Existiert Gott? Antwort auf die Gottesfrage der Neuzeit* (München: R. Piper, 1978), Chapter 3. Jürgen Moltmann, *Der Gekreuzigte Gott* (Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1973), Chapter 7.

¹⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen, 1960), 458. English Translation: *Truth and Method*, Trans. by Joel Weinsheimer (Chicago: Sheed & Ward, 1975; NY: Continuum, second revised edition, 1989), 454.

¹¹ Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 421 and 450. English Translation: *Truth and Method*, 417 and 447.

meet.¹² Accordingly, a dream language contains a hidden dream theory, while an unhidden dream theory supplies a grammar and methodology to people for their use of dream language. A dream language is essentially a view of the dream world.¹³

The contemporary Church has its “own” biblical, dogmatic, homiletic, liturgical, ethical and theological languages which have been inherited from the Christian tradition. But it does not have her “own” oneirological language.¹⁴ She has lost, or is disconnected from, the dream language which was constructed in the Christian tradition and was utilised by the early Church.¹⁵ The poverty of a Christian dream language eventually renders contemporary believers incapable of understanding the dream world from the perspective of Christian faith.

George Lindbeck has also demonstrated the importance of language to religious beliefs, as well as the critical relation between language and the formation of the thought of the religious. He remarks that the process of becoming religious “is

¹² Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 478. English Translation: *Truth and Method*, 474.

¹³ This statement borrows from Gadamer’s idea that “every language is a view of the world.” Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 445. English Translation: *Truth and Method*, 441.

¹⁴ Here, “her ‘own’ language (or Christianity’s ‘own’ language)” does not denote that Christianity has (created) a solitary, exclusive or self-contained language which has never used or assimilated any notions and terms from the sources outside Christianity, but that Christianity has a linguistic system whose core conceptions are largely in tune with Christian beliefs and whose core terminologies are composed of the terms that originally derive from the Christian community itself or have been regarded as “Christian terms (e.g. trinity, ecclesiastic, pneumatology, etc)” by the majority in the society where the language is used. Moreover, in the Christian tradition a Christian language has been constructed for the use of the Christian community. Therefore, it can be well comprehended only with knowledge of Christian faith. People outside the Christian community who lack that knowledge may find the Christian language incomprehensible or unreasonable. In this sense, this kind of language can be labeled as Christianity’s “own” language.

¹⁵ This problem also appears in many other fields. Christianity before the Enlightenment, for example, had its “own” etiological languages. However, modern Christianity has lost or become disconnected from this language. With regard to the origin of Christian (or Paul’s) etiological theory, see Dale Martin’s book, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 1999). Martin’s work has shown that most terms and notions of etiology (the origins of disease and body pollution) which Paul used may originate from Greek and Roman medical theories. Nevertheless, it is also obvious that Paul incorporated those terms and notions into his Christian belief and used them to demonstrate (or justify) his teachings concerning the original causes of collective and individual diseases and body pollutions. Afterward, based on Paul’s teaching, church fathers developed a patristic etiological language whose core conceptions were largely incorporated with Christian beliefs and whose core terminology were made up of the terms that had been identified as Christian by people in the Roman Empire from late antiquity to the Middle Ages. In this regard, this etiological language can be called Christianity’s “own” etiological language.

similar to that of acquiring a language— that is, interiorising outlooks that others have created, and mastering skills that others have honed.” To learn Christian faith resembles the learning of “grammatical patterns and lexical resources of a foreign tongue.”¹⁶ He posits:

A religion can be viewed as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought....Like a culture or language, it is a communal phenomenon that shapes the subjectivities of individuals....It comprises a vocabulary of discursive and nondiscursive symbols together with a distinctive logic or grammar in terms of which this vocabulary can be meaningfully deployed.¹⁷

Lindbeck further asserts, “[to] become religious involves becoming skilled in the language, the symbol system of a given religion.” For him, to become a Christian involves learning the Christian language “well enough to interpret and experience oneself and one’s world in its terms.”¹⁸ In other words, the internalisation of Christian faith requires the acquisition of the Christian language. One becomes a Christian by understanding oneself, one’s society and this world through the Christian language which has been constructed in the Christian tradition. This Christian language can be subdivided into Christian languages which include not only biblical, dogmatic and theological languages, but also the languages of all other subjects (e.g. physiology, oneirology, ethics, politics, sociology, etc) which enable Christians to grasp everything in Christian terms. For the same reason, there can never be a true Christian dreamer until there is a Christian dream language. Without

¹⁶ George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 22.

¹⁷ Ibid, 33.

¹⁸ Ibid, 34.

it, Christians are compelled to perceive their dreams from a non-Christian (or “pagan,” to use the early Christian term) standpoint, in modern dominant oneirological terms.

Indeed, the dream world is never a private domain. One always accesses it with certain preconceptions which originate mostly from a collective ideology of dreams. Likewise, one does not interpret dreams by oneself without any presumptions or predispositions of dreams, or without an oneiric language which has prevailed in one’s society or community. The meaning, value or purpose of one’s dreams is often found not merely in a personal context, but in a communal sense. What modern oneirology has established is a predominant ideology of dreams which has theoretically and linguistically managed people’s understandings and interpretations of their dreams over a century. The theory and language which Christians now adopt when they think and talk about dreams is largely, if not entirely, derived from modern oneirology. Inevitably, our views of dreams are in a major part shaped by it, and thus can hardly be proclaimed as Christian.

Some thorny problems arise from this plight. Without a Christian dream theory or language, for example, how can contemporary theologians form compelling critiques of modern oneirology? How can they express their opinions about dreams theologically? How can they assist lay believers in comprehending dreams, or create a way which directs them to the Christian dream world?

2. Resources for a Christian Oneirology

The fact that modern Christianity has neither its own dream theory nor dream language urges its theologians to exploit the theoretical and linguistic resources for oneirological construction from the Christian tradition, that is, from the biblical,

patristic, and medieval Christian traditions.¹⁹ There are several dream texts (e.g. dream accounts, interpretations and discussions) in the Scripture, over four-fifths of them in the Hebrew Bible.²⁰ Yet some scholars may argue that the dream texts in the Hebrew Bible should be seen as Jewish dream texts which textually and contextually reflect Jewish views of dreams. Even when counting those texts and those views as Christian, the dreams texts in the entire Bible are still far from adequate to produce a comprehensive dream theory.²¹

Modern theologians will also encounter some problems when they try to find oneirological resources from the medieval Christian tradition. For example, most of the dream materials in the medieval Church before the thirteenth century are actually reproductions of patristic Christian dream theories and language. Steven Kruger notices that the dream theories composed by church fathers were largely incorporated into medieval Christian oneirology. He asserts that Augustine's view of dreams "became central to medieval discussions of perception and of dreaming" while "Gregory [the Great] became known as a great authority on the dream."²² Patristic thoughts still had a strong power to impact on medieval treatments and attitudes towards dreams. In a sense, Christian oneirological materials in the Middle Ages

¹⁹ Following the conviction of Ernst Troeltsch and James Livingston, this thesis views the Enlightenment—the scientific and philosophical revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—as the beginning of modern Christianity, and also considers Reformation Christianity as part of medieval Christianity. According to James Livingston, Reformation Christianity "was still largely medieval in outlook." James Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought, Vol.1, Enlightenment and Nineteenth Century* (NY: Prentice Hall, 1988, reprint, 1997), xiv. Hence, this thesis does not mention the Reformation and Enlightenment traditions, but classifies them into medieval and modern Christian traditions respectively.

²⁰ For the list of the dream texts in the Scripture, see below, section 6.b, Sources.

²¹ The main reason why the Bible does not have enough resources to produce a dream theory is because it does not address many critical issues concerning dreams. For example, the Bible contains no discussion of demon-inspired dreams, although a considerable number of such discussions appear in patristic and medieval texts. The Bible also provides extremely little information about human-inspired dreams which people have almost everyday. Hence it is impossible for theologians to establish a dream theory only by consulting the Bible.

²² Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, 58-62.

before the thirteenth century should be essentially recognised as patristic sources, rather than medieval ones.

From the twelfth century onwards, the philosophy of Aristotle, whose theory of dreams disparaged their nonphysical and religious dimensions, gradually became accepted by theologians. “Aristotelian scientific tradition” became influential in shaping a new Christian oneirological outlook.²³ Thomas Aquinas deliberately integrated Aristotle’s philosophy into Christian theology, but his theology was not appreciated as authoritative in his time. Morton Kelsey observes that patristic dream theories remained dominant until Thomas Aquinas’s view of dreams began to take over in the fourteenth century. Kelsey remarks, “Indeed, there is no place for dreams either in the philosophic system of Aristotle or the theology of Aquinas.” “Thus dreams were no longer considered significant in the theological circles of Western Europe, both Catholic and Protestant, from the fourteenth century to today.”²⁴ Since dream resources in the medieval tradition after the thirteenth century are basically Aristotelian, they can probably make little contribution to the contemporary Christian oneirological enterprise.

In contrast to biblical and medieval traditions, the patristic tradition generated in abundance both theoretical and linguistic dream resources which possess defining characteristics of Christian faith.²⁵ Many dream accounts were well-preserved in the

²³ Jean-Claude Schmitt, “The Liminality and Centrality of Dreams in the Medieval West,” in *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming*. Ed. by David Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa (NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 279.

²⁴ Kelsey, *God, Dreams, and Revelation*, 108, 152-6. Here Kelsey’s remark is probably too sweeping a statement. However, to a large extent, it is still true. It is very likely that no major theologian from the fourteenth century to the present has ever produced a Christian theory of dreams through a book or treatise.

²⁵ Following the standpoint of the Roman Catholic Church, this thesis uses the term “the patristic tradition” to denote the Christian tradition (including Christian thoughts, beliefs, practices, language, culture, etc.) established by church fathers. “Church fathers” signifies the writers or teachers who followed the apostles of Christ within the Christian community in the West as well as in the East, roughly from the late first century to the middle of the eighth century, or more precisely from Clement

early ecclesiastical literature from one generation to another. Several of them were translated to another language and widely circulated in the early Christian community. Some dream texts were publicly read to the congregations as a section in liturgy on a certain day, both in the Eastern and the Western Church.²⁶

Moreover, patristic writings held copious dream discourses.²⁷ Many church fathers did not assume that dreams were situated outside the realm of God's providence, or had nothing to do with Christian faith. Nor did they see dreams as meaningless or peripheral. Rather, they regarded dreams as one of the most significant ways of understanding themselves and their God. They associated dreams closely with Christian doctrines. They were actively involved in dialogues with pagans, heretics or their Christian fellows concerning dreams, as they were with regard to other popular issues of the time.²⁸ They instructed their congregations to correctly understand dreams.

Some church fathers (e.g. Tertullian and Gregory of Nyssa) elaborately

of Rome (Bishop of Rome from 88 to 99 C.E.; the first Apostolic Father) to Isidore of Seville (ca.560-636) in the West and to John of Damascus (ca.676-754; the last church father) in the East. This thesis also adopts the Catholic list of church fathers. See W.J. Burghardt, "Fathers of the Church," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume V, eds by B.L. Marthaler (MI, Farmington Hill: Gale Thomson, 2nd edition, 2003), 640-3; Berthold Altaner, *Patrology*. Trans. by H.C. Graef (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1958), 4-9; and Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*. Vol. 1. Trans. by Placid Solari (Utrecht: Spectrum, 1950, reprint by Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1995), 1-12.

²⁶ The dream text *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, for instance, was widely spread from the third century and publicly read to the congregations, at least annually on Perpetua's commemoration (March 7) in the East and the West Church from the fourth century. The names of Perpetua and Felicitas and their commemoration appeared in the Philocalian liturgical calendar at Rome of the year 354 and also in the Syriac calendar compiled probably in the neighborhood of Antioch at the end of the 4th century. Herbert Thurston ed., *Butler's Lives of the Saints*. Vol. I (London: Burns & Oates, 1956), 498.

²⁷ More details about patristic texts which contain dream accounts and discourses are described in section 6.b, Sources.

²⁸ Church fathers often tried to discourse on any topic which concerned pagans or heretics, just as they would instruct believers in every issue that concerned them. Dreams had fascinated pagans, heretics and Christians, and thus certainly became an issue that many church fathers deemed necessary to deal with. In fact, dreams were of major interest to the heretic sects, particularly the Ebionites, the disciples of Valentine, the Capocrates, the followers of Montanus and the adherents of Artemon Natalias. For discussion, see Jacques Le Goff, *Medieval Imagination* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 284-6; 293-4.

developed a theory of human-inspired dreams, while others (e.g. Lactantius) did so for demon-inspired dreams.²⁹ Some (e.g. John Cassian) openly explicated the nature of sexual dreams.³⁰ Others (e.g. Augustine and Gregory the Great) strongly linked divinely-inspired dreams to Christian life.³¹ Still others (e.g. Gregory of Tours) described the dream practices (e.g. the practice of incubation) which many modern Christians have never known or imagined, and which also appear in patristic texts.³² All these church fathers' works, together with other similar patristic dream texts as a whole, marked the geneses of a Christian oneirology and a Christian dream language in church history.

In spite of both the fact that church fathers established a dream tradition, and patristic literature furnishes us with plentiful dream resources, and the fact that contemporary Christianity does not have its own dream theory, modern theologians have neither introduced that dream tradition to the Church nor formulated a dream theory by using these resources. Modern theologians have scrutinised many issues in the patristic tradition which may attract only the attention of scholars, but have overlooked the issues of dreams which have worried or intrigued a considerable number of believers and nonbelievers. Whereas most other subjects in patristics have been deeply discussed in modern theology, the subject of dreams has been rarely addressed.³³

²⁹ The first coherent Christian dream theory was constructed by Tertullian in his *De Anima* 45-9 (ed. J.H. Waszink, 62-67). Gregory of Nyssa in his *De Hominis Opificio* 13 (ed. G.H. Forbes, 172-188) proposed elaborate explications of oneiric function and phenomena. Lactantius examined demon-inspired dreams in his *Divinarum Institutionum* 2.7-19 (SC 337.94-214).

³⁰ John Cassian offered a detailed explanation of sexual dreams in his *De Institutis* 6 (SC 109.262-288) and *Collationes* 12 (SC 54.121-146) and 22 (SC 64.115-135).

³¹ For examples, see Augustine, *Confessiones* 3.11 (BA 13.436-8); *De Trinitate* 2.18 (BA 15.262-8); Gregory the Great's *Dialogorum* 4.49 (SC 265.168-72).

³² Gregory of Tours, *De Virtutibus Sancti Martini* 2.4; 2.23 (PL 71.941-2; 950-1); *De Virtutibus Sancti Juliani* 9; 23-24 (PL 71.807; 815-6).

³³ As Laura Nasrallah observes, "Despite their importance in antiquity, dreams, ecstasy, and the like have often not been treated seriously by modern-day scholars; they have either been dismissed, or

All the questions and problems mentioned above highlight the urgent task that, to use Tertullian's words, "*Tenemur hic de somniis quoque Christianam sententiam expromere* (We are bound to expound at this point what is the opinion of Christians respecting dreams)."³⁴ That is, we must develop our own dream theory and language in the present time, at least if only to meet the need of contemporary Christians. Nevertheless, in order to obtain the necessary sources and carry out this task, we need first to consult patristic dream texts and retrieve patristic oneirology, which is perhaps the only comprehensive oneirology that the Church has ever had in its history.

3. Aims of This Thesis

Modern scholarship has presented several outstanding works on ancient Greco-Roman, Jewish or biblical oneirology,³⁵ whereas it has never issued a book or

the methods used to study them are less than ideal. This post-Enlightenment embarrassment towards a phenomenon difficult to explain and to control...emerges out of scholarly commitments to modernity." Laura Salah Nasrallah, "*An Ecstasy of Folly*": *Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Harvard Theological Studies, 2003), 7.

³⁴ Tertullian, *De Anima*, 45.1 (ed. Waszink, 62; trans. P. Holmes, *ANF* 3.223).

³⁵ The works (1) on the Greco-Roman dream tradition, see: C.A. Behr, *Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1968). N. Berlin, "Dreams in Roman Epic: The Hermeneutics of a Narrative Technique," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1994. David Gallop, *Aristotle on Sleep and Dreams* (Ontario: Broadview, 1991; Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 2nd revised edition, 1996). J. Gollnick, *The Religious Dreamworld of Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999). E.L. Highbarger, *The Gates of Dreams* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1940). M. A. Holowchak, *Ancient Science and Dreams* (NY: University Press of America, 2002). A.H.M. Kessels, *Studies on the Dream in Greek Literature* (Utrecht: HES Publishers, 1978). P. Kragelund, *Dream and Prediction in the Aeneid* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 1976). R.G.A. van. Lieshout, *Greeks on Dreams* (Utrecht: HES, 1980). W.S. Messer, *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1918). Beat Näf, *Traum und Traumdeutung im Altertum* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004). S.M. Oberhelman, "The Oneirocritic Literature of the Late Roman and Byzantine Eras of Greece," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1981; (2) on the Jewish dream tradition, see: Frances Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests* (Boston: Brill, 2004) and "Standing at the Heads of Dreamers: A Study of Dreams in Antiquity." Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Iowa, 2000. Robert Karl Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus* (NY: E. J. Brill, 1996). A. Leo Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1956). Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition* (PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); and (3) on the biblical dream tradition, see: Shaul Bar, *A Letter That Has Not Been Read* (Hebrew Union College Press, 2001) and "Dreams in the Bible (Theophany)." Ph.D. Dissertation,

monograph which is devoted solely to the study of patristic oneirology, despite the fact that this study is significant to both contemporary theology and the Christian community. This thesis may be the first academic attempt to undertake this task.

Many early Christian writers conceived of a dream theory, conceptualised dream phenomena or interpreted their own dreams or the dreams of prominent figures, both inside and outside the Church. This thesis aims to explore their views of the nature of dreams. Specifically, it probes into the patristic dream tradition and the answers it offers to the essential questions of dreams that were considered by early Christian writers. These questions include: What are the sources of dreams? How do dreams function? What are dreams for? What truth can be revealed by dreams and their phenomena? Who is capable of interpreting dreams? Who can be the dreamers of the Christian community? What can dreams do for Christian faith and for the Church?

We can be certain that there was never only one patristic view on any given issue. Early Christian writers have offered diverse ideas about dreams. Their opinions even contradict each other. However, their views corresponded to their contemporary Christian beliefs and agreed with one another to a certain extent. This thesis intends to uncover various patristic thoughts on dreams and construct a comprehensive patristic dream theory by early Christian dream language.³⁶ Its aim is to recover the patristic oneirology which was established by early Christian dream texts, and which once existed within the Christian community.

New York University, 1987. Derek S. Dodson, "Reading Dreams: An Audience-Critical Approach to the Dreams in the Gospel of Matthew." Ph.D. Dissertation, Baylor University, 2006. Jean-Marie Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World* (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999). Bart J. Koet (Ed.), *Dreams and Scripture in Luke-Acts* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006). Margaret Robinson, "Dreams in the Old Testament." Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Manchester, 1987.

³⁶ Through the construction, this thesis is thus able to present a Christian dream language which can be consulted and employed by contemporary Christians when they try to understand and interpret dreams in Christian terms, or to express a Christian view of dreams theologically.

In addition, almost all the dreams narrated or discussed in patristic writings can be classified into three types: human-inspired, demon-inspired and divinely-inspired dreams. Although many dreams in patristic literature were sent or given by angels, rather than the divine, they can still be categorised into the third type, as they all served for the divine will or for a divinely salvific purpose.³⁷ Following this tripartite dream typology, the content of this thesis is divided into three parts, each of which examines one of these groups of dreams.

This thesis argues that the nature of human-inspired dreams in patristic texts can be deemed as creations of the soul, as indicators of the dreamer's state and as moral reflection (Part I, Chapter 1 to 3), the nature of demon-inspired dreams as demonic assault, temptation or deception (Part II, Chapter 4) and finally the nature of divinely-inspired dreams as a site of epiphany, as divine messages and as the dynamic of faith reinforcement (Part III, Chapter 5 to 7).

Furthermore, unlike pagan authors, early Christian writers did not elucidate dreams simply for philosophical, psychological, medical or oneirological purposes. Rather, their real agenda was to promulgate Christian doctrines, including the doctrines of man, asceticism, sin, demonology, God, Christology, revelation and eschatology. They nearly always dealt with the issues of dreams in the doctrinal framework, while tightly relating dreams with doctrines. When they encountered dreams, they not only interpreted, but doctrinalised them, just as they did to many other aspects of human life. Whatever dreams God may have had in store for the Church would be practically utilised for their doctrinal contention.

³⁷ For patristic dream typology, see Tertullian, *De Anima* 47 (ed. Waszink, 65-6); Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, 12.18.39-40 (*BA* 49.300-94); Gregory the Great, *Dialogorum* 4.50 (*SC* 265.172-4). For discussion, see Le Goff, *Medieval Imagination*, 288-9, 292, 298-9. J. H. Waszink, *Tertulliani De Anima: Edited with Introduction and Commentary* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1947), 500-503. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, 38-50.

In terms of methodology, they dogmatically expounded dreams so as to facilitate their dissemination of the doctrines. Dreams were employed to clarify and undergird their doctrinal teachings. The making of patristic oneirology is essentially the propagation of dogmatics. In terms of hermeneutics, they integrated doctrinal tenets into their explication of dreams. Their doctrines defined the essence of dreams and even orientated their mission outside the dream world. By analysing dreams, they made their doctrines infiltrate into people's daily life. Accordingly, their oneirological and doctrinal conceptions are inextricably intertwined and serve each other. Hence, in each chapter both the doctrinal indications of patristic dreams and the oneiric implications of a related doctrine will also be traced. In return, the methodological and hermeneutical relationships between dreams and doctrines in patristic texts will be demonstrated.

Nevertheless, this thesis will not only attend to the theoretical dimension of dreams, but to the practical one as well. Dreams played a crucial part in the conversion of pagans to Christianity, as well as in the lives of early Christians, especially when they faced severe persecution. For these reasons, each chapter will also more or less attempt to illumine the profound meanings of dreams to early Christian faith and life, and also the powerful influence dreams had on both.

Finally, in its concluding chapter, this thesis suggests that modern scholars should move towards understanding patristic dreams in their doctrinal context. It also proposes that oneirology should to be included in the field of theology, particularly as one branch of patristics. It further calls on contemporary theologians to advance towards a renaissance in patristic views of dreams in order to resurrect the early Christian dream tradition.

4. Approach of This Study

This thesis researches patristic views of dreams by means of analysing patristic dreams texts in their context. Virtually all dream narratives, interpretations and discourses in patristic literature emerged from within the context of early Christian doctrines. They appeared and functioned mainly for doctrinal ends. Patristic dreams and doctrines were substantially interlaced, as noted above. Therefore, the doctrinal approach is contextually the key to the correct comprehension of patristic views of dreams.

Many articles have discussed the dreams in patristic writings, but most of their authors do not read these dreams correctly in their doctrinal context. As a result, their interpretations are scarcely in accordance with what these dreams originally attempted to represent.³⁸ This thesis endeavours to remedy the deficiency in the construction of patristic views of dreams by a corresponding analytic approach.

This study follows two lines, discovering patristic oneirology in its doctrinal context, and at the same time, investigating the related doctrines revealed in patristic dream texts. The task of the former line cannot be accomplished without undertaking the work of the latter; likewise, the work of the latter cannot be achieved without consideration of the former. Both of them must proceed side by side. They illuminate and annotate each other. By so doing, we can hope to arrive at a new understanding of patristic views of both dreams and the related doctrines, and thus make significant contributions to both contemporary oneirology and patristics.

³⁸ For a typical example of interpreting patristic dreams without considering their doctrinal context, see Marie-Louise von Franz, “Die Passio Perpetuae,” in *Aion: Untersuchungen zur Symbolgeschichte*, ed. by C. G. Jung (Zürich: Rascher, 1951.), 387-496. More discussions will be provided below: section 7, Literature Review.

5. Appendices: Greco-Roman, Jewish and Biblical Oneirologies

The historical and cultural background of the patristic dream tradition must also be considered. Every theory is formulated in a given setting and assimilates pre-existing ideas from other theories. Undoubtedly, early Christian writers developed their notions or theories of dreams in the ancient Greco-Roman milieu, and also absorbed some pagan oneirological conceptions of dreams, while inheriting certain Jewish and biblical convictions of dreams.

Greco-Roman views of dreams predominated over other oneirological views in the ancient world. Dreams preoccupied ancient Greeks and Romans. In this social setting, diverse dream typologies and theories were established, numerous dream books written, and myriad dream accounts recorded. Although various dream classifications were provided in Greco-Roman oneirology, almost all of them fell into two categories: one according to the content of dreams (e.g. true or false dreams, and useful or useless dreams) and the other according to their origin (e.g. caused by gods, daemons, the dead or dreamers themselves). Concerning dream theory, some philosophers posited that dreams were nothing but mental images naturally derived from sensory impressions, while some physicians believed that dreams could disclose the dreamer's physical state and disease.

For most Greco-Roman writers, however, dreams could relay extraordinary knowledge, impart vital messages, foretell future events or prescribe treatment for the dreamer's malady. Dreams in Greco-Roman literature often occurred before the beginning, or near the end, of a noble life, a decisive war, a new kingdom or a great empire. The practice of dream incubation (in which people performed ritual purification, sacrifice or fasting in a sacred place, usually in a temple or shrine, and then slept there overnight in order to appeal to the gods for divine guidance or

remedy by means of dreams) were popular in Greco-Roman culture, whereas it was prohibited in the Hebrew Bible and was condemned by several church fathers.

Jewish views of dreams had less influence over the early Christian dream tradition than biblical or Greco-Roman views. None of Hellenistic Jewish writers ever proposed a dream theory, while among them Philo is the only one who formulated a dream typology (according to the origin of dreams). Dream accounts in their writings functioned primarily for the expression of religious belief or theological agenda. Even sexual dreams were entirely germane to religious affairs within the context of Judaism. Dreams could serve as a sacred venue for the divine manifestation, as a medium of divine revelation or as a divine instrument for strengthening the faith of God's chosen people. Almost all dreams in Hellenistic Jewish literature essentially demonstrated the divine sanction of, or the divinely providential care for, the heroes of Israelite sacred history, their descendants and the Jewish readership.

Biblical writers were totally indifferent towards dream typology or theory. Dreams in the Scripture, unlike those in Greco-Roman or patristic literature, remain solely in the domain of divinity and relate closely to faith. Demon-inspired dreams are entirely absent in biblical texts, in which even nightmares were generated by the divine, rather than the devil. It is only God who has power to utilise dreams. Through dreams, biblical figures received divine warnings, revelations, prophecies or encouragement, which was able to reinforce their faith. Dreams appeared at the turning points of the lives of several patriarchs (e.g. Abraham, Jacob and Joseph) as well as the infant Jesus and Paul. On the other hand, not every biblical author viewed dreams in a positive way. Some regarded them as vacuous things or phenomena, while others considered them to be heretical seduction which led people astray from

God.

This thesis, besides exploring the patristic dream tradition, will provide additional discussions of Greco-Roman, Jewish and biblical dream traditions (in Appendix A, B and C, respectively) as helpful references for readers to understand the background in which patristic oneirology was shaped and cultivated.³⁹ These three dream traditions also serve as the comparative objects of patristic oneirology in order to disclose the similarities and differences between the former three and the latter one, and thus to display some unique characteristics of patristic dream theories and language.⁴⁰

6. Sources

a. Patristic Dream Texts

The primary sources which this thesis utilises in order to reach its goal are the patristic dream texts,⁴¹ including those which were written by church fathers— from Clement of Rome (the first Apostolic Father) to Isidore of Seville in the West and to John of Damascus (the last church father) in the East, or roughly from the late first century to the middle of the eighth century—⁴² and those which were not written by church fathers but were cited by them or identified by them, or by the early Christian community, as authoritative as the writings of church fathers (i.e. the texts which were considered to have the same authority as patristic writings).⁴³

³⁹ Considering its focus and its word limit, this thesis discusses these three traditions in its appendix chapters, rather than in the main body of the text.

⁴⁰ A fuller comparison of these four traditions will be made in the Conclusion chapter of this thesis.

⁴¹ For the table of the primary patristic dream texts used in this thesis, see the last pages of this Introduction chapter.

⁴² For the definition of the period and list of church fathers, see above footnote 25.

⁴³ For example, in common with most modern scholarship, this thesis regards *The Shepherd* as a patristic text for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was generally received as an authoritative text in the early Church. Secondly, it was quoted as Scripture by Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses* 4.20.2 [SC

Patristic literature teems with dream accounts, discourses and interpretations which could all act as sources for this thesis. However, in taking account of its limits and aim, this thesis will not examine every patristic dream text. The texts which have been selected and will be comprehensively analysed are those which provide more details regarding the content of dreams, or which more explicitly reflect their authors' beliefs concerning dreams. Most of the unselected dream texts will be briefly discussed or noted in footnotes for reference.

Specifically, the primary patristic dream texts which this thesis analyses for the purpose of delving into patristic views of human-inspired dreams (Part I, Chapter 1 to 3) include: Athanasius' *Contra Gentes*; Augustine's *Confessiones*, *Contra Iulianum*, *De Anima et Eius Origine*, *De Bono Coniugali*, *De Cura pro Mortuis Gerenda*, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, *De Quantitate Animae*; John Cassian's *Collationes*, *De Institutis*; Evagrius Ponticus' *De Diversis Malignis Cogitationibus*, *Praktikos*, *Rerum Monachalium Rationes*; Gregory of Nyssa's *De Hominis Opificio*, *Vita Sanctae Macrinae*; John Chrysostom's *De Penitentia*, *Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Corinthios*, *Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Thessalonicenses*, *Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Timotheum*; Tertullian's *Adversus Marcionem*, *De Anima*, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*, *De Testimonio Animae*.

The primary texts for understanding patristic views of demon-inspired dreams (Part II, Chapter 4) include: Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, *Epistulae*; John Cassian's *Collationes*, *De Institutis*; Evagrius Ponticus' *Antirrhetikos*,

100/2.628]), Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* 1.29; 2.1 [SC 30.176; 38.34]), Tertullian (*De Oratione* 16.1-2 [CCL 1.266], in his pre-Montanist period) and Origen (*De Principiis* 4.11 [SC 268.312, column 4.2.4]). Thirdly, it was bound at the end of the New Testament in the Sinaitic Bible *Aleph* (a fourth century uncial manuscript of the Greek Bible). It has been grouped with the works of apostolic fathers in the corpus *The Apostolic Fathers*. Likewise, *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* can also be regarded as a patristic dream text because several church fathers (e.g. Tertullian and Augustine) considered it as authoritative and frequently quoted from the text. Tertullian, *De Anima*, 55.3-4 (ed. Waszink, 73-4). Augustine, *Sermones* 280.2-4; 281.1-2; 394 (PL 38.1281-2; 38.1284; 39.1715-6).

Eulogios, Monks, De Diversis Malignis Cogitationibus, Scholia on Ecclesiastes, Praktikos; Irenaeus' Adversus Haereses; Lactantius' Divine Institutes, Epitome Divinarum Institutionum; Tertullian's Apologeticum, De Anima.

Finally, the primary texts used for examining patristic views of divinely-inspired dreams (Part III, Chapter 5 to 7) include: Augustine's *Confessiones, De Baptismo, De Catechizandis Rudibus, De Civitate Dei, De Genesi ad Litteram, De Trinitate, Epistulae, Enarrationes in Psalmos*; Basil of Caesarea's *Epistulae*; Cyprian's *Ad Quirinum*; Eusebius of Caesarea's *Historia Ecclesiastica, Vita Constantini*; Gregory the Great's *Dialogorum, Moralia in Job*; Jerome's *Apologia contra Rufinum, Epistolae*; Justin Martyr's *Dialogus cum Tryphone Iudaeo*; Lactantius' *De Mortibus Persecutorum, Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*; Pontius' *Vita Cypriani*; Sulpicius Severus' *Chronicorum, Vita Sancti Martini Turonensis*; Tertullian's *Ad Nationes, Adversus Praxeam, De Anima, De Virginibus Velandis, The Shepherd of Hermas.*

The Greek and Latin patristic texts consulted are those from modern critical editions. Almost all modern critical editions of each text are listed in the Bibliography, with the edition quoted and used most listed as the last among them. Wherever modern critical editions are not yet available, the thesis mainly uses the texts in *Patrologia Graeca* (Paris, 1857-66) and *Patrologia Latina* (Paris, 1844-65) edited by Jacques Paul Migne. Likewise, almost all English translation versions of each text are listed in the Bibliography, with the version consulted and quoted most listed as the last among them.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ For example, the text of *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* which this thesis uses is provided by SC 417 (ed. by Jacqueline Amat, 1996). For the English translation, this thesis has mainly consulted Herbert Musurillo's version in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972, reprint, 2000). See Ancient Sources of Bibliography of this thesis.

b. Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Biblical Dream Texts

In antiquity, it seems that people began to record dreams as soon as they created the art of literacy. A large number of old hieroglyphic records are inscribed with narratives of dreams.⁴⁵ Some ancient written languages may have been established for the intention of recording dreams. Moreover, people in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds were greatly fascinated with dreams and their interpretations. The practices regarding dreams were popular among religions. It is not surprising that abundant dream texts appear in ancient Greek, Roman and Jewish literatures.

The Greco-Roman and Jewish dream texts which this thesis discusses in Appendices are, however, limited to those which may have influenced, or have been well-known to, church fathers. Although many ancient dream texts are excluded, the materials chosen in this thesis are still plentiful. Considering the focus of this study and the purpose of non-patristic dream texts, which serve to present the background information, this thesis inevitably approaches Greco-Roman, Jewish and biblical dream texts in a somewhat reductionist way, seeking not to become enmeshed in minutiae, but to excavate the larger structures and the overall set of general views of dreams in those texts.

To be specific, the primary Greco-Roman dream texts examined by this thesis in the Appendix chapters include: Aeschylus' *Eumenides*; Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*; Aristides' *The Sacred Tales*; Aristotle's *On Dreams*, *On Prophesying by Dreams*, and *On Sleep*; Artemidorus' *Oneirocritica*; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*; Cicero's *On*

⁴⁵ Anthony Stevens, *Private Myths: Dreams and Dreaming* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995, reprint, 1996), 8.

Divination and On the Republic; Galen's *On Diagnosis from Dreams*; Herodotus' *Historiae*; Hippocrates' *Regimen*; Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; Iamblichus' *On Mysteries*; Lucian of Samosata's *A True Story*; Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; Plato's *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Theaetetus*, and *Timaeus*; Virgil's *Aeneis*; Chalcidius' *On Dreams*; Xenophon's *On the Cavalry Commander*.

The Jewish dream texts include: *1 Enoch* 1-36, 83-90; *Jubilees*; *Pseudo-Philo*; *4 Ezra*; *2 Baruch*; *Ezekiel the Tragedian*; *Testament of Job*; *2 Enoch*; *The Ladder of Jacob*; *Testament of Abraham*; *Testament of Levi*; *Testament of Naphtali*; *Testament of Joseph*; Philo's *On Dream* and *On Joseph*; Josephus' *Jewish Wars*, *Jewish Antiquities*, *Life of Flavius Josephus* and *Against Apion*.⁴⁶

Finally, the biblical dream texts include those in the Old Testament (i.e. Genesis 15:12-21, 20:3-7, 26:24, 28:10-22, 31:10-13, 31:24, 37:5, 37:10, 40, 41, 42:9, 46:1-5; Leviticus 19:26; Numbers 12:6-8, 22:8-21; Deuteronomy 13:1-6, 23:10-12; Judges 7:13-15; 1 Samuel 28:6; 1 Kings 3:5-15; Additions to Esther 11:2-12; Job 4:12-21, 7:13-14, 20:8, 33:15-17; Psalms 73:20, 126:1; Ecclesiastes 5:3, 5:7; Isaiah 29:7-8; Jeremiah 23:25-32, 27:9-10, 29:8-9; Daniel 2, 4, 7; Joel 2:28; Zechariah 1:7-6:15, 10:2.), those in the deuterocanonical books (i.e. Ecclesiasticus 34:1-8, 40:5-7, 2; Wisdom 18:17-19; 2 Maccabees 15:11-16)⁴⁷ and those in the New

⁴⁶ The Jewish dream texts should include those in the canonical books (i.e. the Hebrew Bible and the deuterocanonical books), which can represent both Jewish views and biblical views of dreams. However, church fathers regarded the non-canonical writings as much less authoritative and significant than the canonical books. In addition, they treated the oneirological ideas in the canonical Jewish books mainly as biblical views of dreams, instead of Jewish ones. Considering these two reasons and also to avoid repetition, this thesis uses the dream texts in the canonical books only in the Appendix of biblical views of dreams, not in that of Jewish views of dreams. Correspondingly, the Appendix of Jewish views of dreams presents only the oneirological ideas found in the non-canonical Jewish literature. I have consulted the work of Flannery-Dailey for what Jewish dream texts should be properly included in my research. See Frances Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 2-4, 117-119. But for lack of competence, I will not discuss the Jewish texts in the Qumran Scrolls.

⁴⁷ Some scholars (e.g. E.L. Ehrlich) counted thirty-five dream texts in the Old Testament and the deuterocanonical books, while others (e.g. Martine Dulaey) forty-five; still others (e.g. Le Goff)

Testament (i.e. Matthew 1:20, 2:12, 2:13-15, 2:19-21, 2:22, 27:19; Acts 2:17, 16:9, 18:9, 23:11, and 27:23).

7. Literature Review

As noted above, no modern academic book or monograph has ever been dedicated to the study of patristic views of dreams. Many scholars, when analysing the dreams in patristic literature, do not chiefly attempt to unveil the church father's thoughts on dreams, but are primarily concerned with other themes.⁴⁸

Morton Kelsey asserts that his book, *God, Dreams, and Revelation: A Christian Interpretation of Dreams*, published in 1968, was “the first careful historical study of Christian dream interpretation in nearly two hundred years. David Simpson's *Discourse on Dreams and Night Visions*, published in 1791, was the last serious discussion of dreams in Western Christianity.”⁴⁹ In spite of his firm assertion, however, Kelsey's book only briefly (using nearly two chapters out of nine, or about 40 pages out of 300 pages) sketches patristic oneirology, which may be the most important, abundant and comprehensive Christian oneirology in history. In fact, a critical analysis of a patristic dream text or a correct contour of the patristic dream tradition can hardly be found in his book.

From 1968 to the present, only two scholarly books have deeply investigated

forty-three. The three lists—the lists of the dream texts in the Old Testament, the deuterocanonical books, and the New Testament—shown here basically draw from Le Goff's work, but with the addition of Ps 126:1, Dan 7 and Acts 2:17, and with the exclusion of Lev 19:26, 2 Chr 33:6 and Jer 14:14. See Ernst L. Ehrlich, *Der Traum im Alten Testament* (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1953); Martine Dulaey, *Le Rêve dans la vie et la pensée de saint Augustin* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1973), 231-2. Le Goff, *L'imaginaire Médiéval*, 314-6.

⁴⁸ For examples, see Peter Brown, *The Body and Society* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1988); Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986; NY: Penguin, reprint, 2006); Laura S. Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly*; and Cecil M. Robeck's *Prophecy in Carthage* (Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 1992).

⁴⁹ Kelsey, *God, Dreams, and Revelation*, 8.

the Christian dream theories before the modern time. One of them primarily searches late ancient oneirologies, and the other late medieval oneirologies. Both inspect patristic oneirology as part of their tasks. Nonetheless, both have examined many more patristic dream texts than any other modern scholarly book, despite their main focus not being on patristic oneirology. It is, therefore, worth briefly reviewing these two books in order to appreciate what has been done in contemporary scholarship regarding the patristic dream tradition.⁵⁰

Published in 1994, Patricia Cox Miller's *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* is an academic work on dreams in Western literature from the second to fifth centuries. Guy Stroumsa observes that this book "represents the first sustained effort to present and analyze the place of dreams in the culture of the Roman Empire" in late antiquity.⁵¹ Gillian Clark wrote that Miller offers "a careful survey of previous interpretations and an alternative reading which deploys more recent concerns.... This [her book] is an adventurous exploration of a range of material which deserves to be more widely known."⁵²

Miller surveys both pagan and Christian dreams in order to reveal some fundamental patterns of late antique culture. She contends that in late antiquity dreams were "one of the modes of the production of meaning, dreams formed a distinctive pattern of imagination which brought visual presence and tangibility to such abstract concepts as time cosmic history, the soul, and the identity of one's

⁵⁰ There were several works on dreams and dream theories before modern times. However, since this thesis focuses on patristic oneirology, it reviews only the works whose contents are relatively substantial in discussing patristic dream theories. Therefore, this thesis does not review, for example, Martine Dulaey's *Le Rêve dans la vie et la pensée de saint Augustin*, because it mainly examines the role of dreams in the life and thought of Augustine, rather than dreams themselves or dream theories, although it discusses many patristic dream theories and texts as background information.

⁵¹ Guy G. Stroumsa, "Book Reviews: Dreams in Late Antiquity," in *JR*, 76. No. 3 (Jan 1996), 469.

⁵² Gillian Clark, "Reviews: Dreams in Late Antiquity," in *CR* 46, No. 1 (1996), 85-6.

self.” Her attention is given to “the role of dreams as a technology for managing hope, fears, and anxieties, and to their roles as a discourse that provided occasion for articulations of ethical and philosophical ideas.” For her, dreaming is “one of the techniques of the care of the self that was a cultural preoccupation not aligned with particular religious persuasions.”⁵³

Indeed, Miller’s analyses of many patristic dream texts make a great contribution to our understanding of the dream culture of early Christians and their use of dreams not only as a means of self-awareness and self-identification, but also as a language to represent their experience and worlds. Yet, she overlooks some important dimensions of ancient dreams and explores early Christian dream theories neither in depth nor in their original context. For example, she uses only three pages (out of 253 pages)⁵⁴ to examine Tertullian’s dream theory, which was the first and the most comprehensive, coherent and significant theory of dreams in early Christianity.

Moreover, Tertullian mainly developed his dream theory in his book, *De Anima (On the Soul)*, in order to explicate his doctrine of the soul and his theological anthropology, both of which are the key to correctly and contextually comprehending his dream theory. He also attempted to propose his ascetic and demonological ideas through his discourses on dreams.⁵⁵ In her explanation of Tertullian’s dream theory, however, Miller mentions neither its doctrinal context nor its close relation to his anthropology, asceticism or demonology. Likewise, although she spends almost one third of her book (78 out of 253 pages)⁵⁶ discussing the dreams of three prominent Christian figures, Hermas, Perpetua and Jerome, her interpretations of these dreams

⁵³ Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, reprint, 1998), 3, 13, and 130.

⁵⁴ Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 67-70.

⁵⁵ The close relationship between Tertullian’s dream theory and his doctrines will be discussed in Chapter 1 to 4 of this thesis.

⁵⁶ Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 131-83; 205-31.

contain few references to their theological or doctrinal meanings, which were perhaps the primary concern of these figures.⁵⁷

Miller's approach to patristic dreams is cultural, linguistic (or semiotic), feminist and psychological, rather than religious,⁵⁸ although most of the patristic dream texts she examines were written essentially for a theological purpose in a certain doctrinal context.⁵⁹ She analyses early Christian dream texts in a way which fits her own agenda, rather than their authors'.⁶⁰ By ignoring the specific context and theological motives of these texts, her book may not accurately reflect patristic views of dreams.

The other book is Steven Kruger's *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, published in 1992. Jeffrey Russell notes that Kruger's is the first book to be devoted to a scholarly analysis of medieval dreams.⁶¹ Alison Peden claims that Kruger's book "provides not only an up-to-date survey of dream theory but also a case-history for the Classical tradition."⁶² Kruger is concerned mainly with the late medieval view of dreams and unravels what dreams and dreaming meant to medieval writers. His book delineates the larger cultural view of dreams in the Middle Ages. He also studies late antique dream texts in order to provide a background for medieval oneirological development and shifts.

⁵⁷ The dreams of these three figures will be analysed in Chapter 5 to 7 of this thesis.

⁵⁸ Lee T. Percy asserts, "[Miller] draws on post-modernist literary theory and its background in philosophy and psychology, seeks to cast doubt on the reality of such traditional entities as author, work, and reader in order to deconstruct the experience of reading a literary text." Percy, "Book Review," in *JECS* 5.1 (1997), 117.

⁵⁹ Guy Stroumsa points out that theology "played a crucial role" in those late antique Christian dreams, but Miller pays no attention to its relation to those dreams. Stroumsa, "Book Reviews," 470.

⁶⁰ As Thomas J. Heffernan remarks, "The problem with this reading [Miller's reading of the dream texts] is it is reductive; everything is made to fit the demands of the program." Heffernan, "Book Reviews," in *CHR*, 82, No. 4 (1996), 677. For Miller's problem of misplacing the context, also see S.R.F. Price, "Review," in *JRS*, Vol. 86 (1996), 242-3.

⁶¹ Jeffrey Burton Russell, "Reviews," in *Speculum*, Vol. 69, No. 3. (Medieval Academy of America, Jul., 1994), 818.

⁶² Alison Peden, "Shorter Notices," in *EHR*, Vol. 110, No. 437 (1995), 678.

Kruger finds in medieval dream texts that dreams “are treated as both precious and dangerous; handbooks of dream divination are enormously popular, and yet their use is often expressly forbidden.”⁶³ He argues that the medieval attitude towards dreams was ambiguous and complex. Dreams were reckoned both as dangerously associated with pagan practices and demonic deception, and as divinely-inspired and capable of predicting the future. Yet, the medieval world did not have trouble accepting this double dimension or treatment of dreams because the concepts of “doubleness” and “middleness” were already embedded deeply in medieval minds. This ambivalent attitude towards dreams therefore marks the outlook of medieval oneirology.⁶⁴

It seems, however, that Kruger was much less interested in dream theory than in dream practice or experience. He attempts to portray “the large cultural ‘view’ of the dream” in the late Middle Ages, which includes philosophical, theological, psychological and medical views.⁶⁵ Although in his book Kruger has shown his erudite knowledge and careful analysis of medieval history and literature, and although he has consulted many dream texts, he speaks of medieval dream theories very briefly, rather than deeply or elaborately. As Michael Uebel points out, “It should be clear that [Kruger’s] readers looking for theoretical elaborations of the medieval oneiric process will be disappointed.”⁶⁶

Another problem in Kruger’s book is that he neglects many significant dream texts. Marcia Colish notes that “Kruger’s coverage is alarmingly skewed. He omits some very obvious sources, such as saints’ lives, exegeses of the books of the Bible

⁶³ Kruger, *Dreaming*, 6.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 17-35 and 75-82.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 6.

⁶⁶ Michael Uebel, “Book Reviews,” in *SAR*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (1993), 137.

in which dreams and visionary experiences are reported, and most of the mystical tradition of the High and late Middle Ages.”⁶⁷ Colish thus remarks, “Kruger can be regarded as one among several scholars who have sought to open up this subject. But his book cannot be seen as having covered it, or even as having mapped it.”⁶⁸

In sum, patristic dream texts have been significantly examined and interpreted by modern scholars; including Patricia Miller and Steven Kruger, who should be regarded as the contemporary leading scholars in the field of late antique and late medieval oneirology respectively. Nevertheless, neither the early Christian dream tradition nor patristic views of dreams have yet been penetrated contextually or deeply enough. In view of the urgent need for introducing patristic dream theories and language into the contemporary Christian community, and also the insufficient attempts of modern scholars to meet this demand, this thesis strives to carry out this task.

8. A Map of the Construction of Patristic Oneirology

This thesis’ construction of Patristic oneirology falls into three parts according to the type of dream. Part One addresses the issues of human-inspired dreams in patristic texts. In Chapter one, the patristic theory of dreams will be explicated, illuminating both how early Christian writers conceptualised dreams and how they utilised their oneirological conceptions to demonstrate their anthropology, which in return shaped their dream theory. In Chapter two, the analyses will turn to how they correlated dreams with the dreamer’s physical, mental or psychical state, and subsequently articulated their ascetic doctrine through this correlation. Chapter

⁶⁷ Marcia L. Colish, “Review,” In *AHR*, Vol. 98, No. 4 (1993), 1221.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 1221.

Three traces not only the development of the patristic theory of sexual dreams in the doctrinal discourse on sin, but also the reason why this theory marked the birth of a new ideology of sexual dreams in late antiquity.

Part Two (Chapter Four) attends to demon-inspired dreams in the patristic tradition. This chapter delves into the endeavours of several church fathers to instruct their audience to discern these dreams and also to learn the theological meanings of nightmares and nocturnal emissions. Their instructions reflected their demonology, by which they diabolised not merely dreams, but their religious rivals as well. Eventually, a patristic anti-dream propaganda was formulated against pagans and heretics.

Part Three surveys divinely-inspired dreams in early Christianity. In Chapter Five patristic reports of dream epiphany and their indications of the doctrine of God or Christology will be investigated. Chapter Six canvasses patristic views of dreams as a language used by the divine to communicate with believers and to reveal the knowledge of God to heathens. It also explores two major themes: who was capable of receiving or interpreting revelatory dreams, and to whom were their messages given. The final chapter will discuss the dreams in early Christian martyrography and hagiography which played a dynamic role in reinforcing people's faith. It will then be shown how these dreams facilitated early Christian writers to disseminate their eschatological teachings.

Table of Primary Patristic Dream Texts Analysed in This Thesis

Texts Used in Part I (Ch.1-3) – Human-Inspired Dreams

| Author | Dream Text | Edition of the Text | Analysed in | Nature of the Dream as |
|--------------|--|--|-------------|---|
| Athanasius | <i>Contra Gentes</i> | <i>PG</i> 25:4-95; <i>SC</i> 18 | Ch. 1 | Creations of the Soul |
| Augustine | <i>Confessiones</i> | <i>PL</i> 32:659-868; <i>BA</i> 13-14 | Ch. 3 | Moral Reflection |
| | <i>Contra Iulianum</i> | <i>PL</i> 44:641-874 | Ch. 3 | Moral Reflection |
| | <i>De Anima et Eius Origine</i> | <i>PL</i> 44:475-548; <i>BA</i> 22 | Ch. 1, 3 | Creations of the Soul Moral Reflection |
| | <i>De Bono Coniugali</i> | <i>PL</i> 43:373-396; <i>BA</i> 2 | Ch. 3 | Moral Reflection |
| | <i>De Cura pro Mortuis Gerenda</i> | <i>PL</i> 40:591-0610; <i>BA</i> 2 | Ch. 3 | Creations of the Soul |
| | <i>De Genesi ad Litteram</i> | <i>PL</i> 34:245-486; <i>BA</i> 48-49 | Ch. 1, 3 | Creations of the Soul Moral Reflection |
| | <i>De Quantitate Animae</i> | <i>PL</i> 32:1033-1080; <i>BA</i> 5 | Ch. 3 | Creations of the Soul |
| John Cassian | <i>Collationes</i> | <i>PL</i> 49: 477-1328; <i>SC</i> 42, 54, 64 | Ch. 3 | Creations of the Soul |
| | <i>De Institutis</i> | <i>PL</i> 49: 53-476; <i>SC</i> 109 | Ch. 3 | Creations of the Soul |
| Evagrius | <i>De Diversis Malignis Cogitationibus</i> | <i>PG</i> 79:1200-33; <i>SC</i> 438 | Ch. 2 | Indicators of the Dreamer's State |
| | <i>Praktikos</i> | <i>PG</i> 40: 1220-1276; <i>SC</i> 171 | Ch. 2 | Indicators of the Dreamer's State |

| | | | | |
|------------------|--|---|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| | <i>Rerum Monachalium Rationes</i> | PG 40:1252-64 | Ch. 2 | Indicators of the Dreamer's State |
| Gregory of Nyssa | <i>De Hominis Opificio</i> , | PG 44:123-156 | Ch. 1, 2 | Creations of the Soul |
| | | | | Indicators of the Dreamer's State |
| | <i>Vita Sanctae Macrinae</i> | PG 46:949-999; SC 178 | Ch. 2 | Indicators of the Dreamer's State |
| John Chrysostom | <i>De Penitentia</i> | PG 49:277-350 | Ch. 2 | Indicators of the Dreamer's State |
| | <i>Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Corinthios</i> | PG 61:11-380 | Ch. 2 | Indicators of the Dreamer's State |
| | <i>Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Thessalonicenses</i> | PG 62:391-467 | Ch. 2 | Indicators of the Dreamer's State |
| | <i>Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Timotheum</i> | PG 62:501-600 | Ch. 2 | Indicators of the Dreamer's State |
| Tertullian | <i>Adversus Marcionem</i> | PL 2:239-524; CCL 1:441-726 | Ch. 3 | Moral Reflection |
| | <i>De Anima</i> | PL 2:641-752; Ed. by J.H. Waszink. Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1947. | Ch. 1, 2, 3 | Creations of the Soul |
| | | | | Indicators of the Dreamer's State |
| | <i>De Resurrectione Mortuorum</i> | PL 2:791-886; CCL 2:919-1012 | Ch. 3 | Moral Reflection |
| | <i>De Testimonio Animae</i> | PL 1:607-618; CCL 1:173-183 | Ch. 3 | Moral Reflection |

Texts Used in Part II (Ch.4) – Demon-Inspired Dreams

| Author | Dream Text | Edition of the Text | Analysed in | Nature of the Dream as |
|--------------|--|--|-------------|----------------------------------|
| Augustine | <i>De Civitate Dei</i> | PL 41:13-804; BA 33-37 | Ch. 4 | Demonic Assault and Deception |
| | <i>De Genesi ad Litteram</i> | PL 34:245-486; BA 48-49 | Ch. 4 | Demonic Deception |
| | <i>Epistulae</i> | PL 33:61-1162; CCL 31, 31A, 31B | Ch. 4 | Demonic Assault and Deception |
| John Cassian | <i>Collationes</i> | PL 49: 477-1328; SC 42, 54, 64 | Ch. 4 | Demonic Temptation and Deception |
| | <i>De Institutis</i> | PL 49: 53-476; SC 109 | Ch. 4 | Demonic Temptation and Deception |
| Evagrius | <i>Aniirrhethikos</i> | Ed. by W. Frankenberg in <i>Neue Folge</i> 13.2. Berlin: Weidmann, 1912. | Ch. 4 | Demonic Deception |
| | <i>Eulogios</i> | PG 79:1093-1140 | Ch. 4 | Demonic Temptation and Deception |
| | <i>Monks</i> | TU 39: 152-65 | Ch. 4 | Demonic Assault |
| | <i>De Diversis Malignis Cogitationibus</i> | PG 79:1200-33; SC 438 | Ch. 4 | Demonic Assault and Deception |
| | <i>Scholia on Ecclesiastes</i> | SC 397 | Ch. 4 | Demonic Assault |
| | <i>Praktikos</i> | PG 40: 1220-1276; SC 171 | Ch. 4 | Demonic Deception |
| Irenaeus | <i>Adversus Haereses</i> | PG 7A:433-7B:1223. SC | Ch. 4 | Demonic Deception |

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|------------|--|---|-------|-------------------------------|
| | | 263-4, 293-4, 210-1, 34, 100, 152-3 | | |
| Lactantius | <i>Divine Institutes</i> | <i>PL</i> 6:111-822. <i>CSEL</i> 19. <i>SC</i> 326, 337, 377, 204, 205, 509 | Ch. 4 | Demonic Assault and Deception |
| | <i>Epitome Divinarum Institutionum</i> | <i>PL</i> 6:1017-1094; <i>SC</i> 335 | Ch. 4 | Demonic Assault and Deception |
| Tertullian | <i>Apologeticum</i> | <i>PL</i> 1:257-536; <i>CCL</i> 1:77-173 | Ch. 4 | Demonic Assault and Deception |
| | <i>De Anima</i> | <i>PL</i> 2:641-752; Ed. by J.H. Waszink. Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1947. | Ch. 4 | Demonic Assault and Deception |

Texts Used in Part III (Ch.5-7) – Divinely-Inspired Dreams

| Author | Dream Text | Edition of the Text | Analysed in | Nature of the Dream as |
|-----------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| Augustine | <i>Confessiones</i> | <i>PL</i> 32:659-868; <i>BA</i> 13-14 | Ch. 5, 6 | Site of Epiphany Divine Messages |
| | <i>De Baptismo</i> | <i>PL</i> 43:107-244; <i>BA</i> 29 | Ch. 6 | Divine Messages |
| | <i>De Catechizandis Rudibus</i> | <i>PL</i> 40:309-348; <i>BA</i> 11.1 | Ch. 6 | Divine Messages |
| | <i>De Civitate Dei</i> | <i>PL</i> 41:13-804; <i>BA</i> 33-37 | Ch. 5, 6 | Site of Epiphany Divine Messages |
| | <i>De Genesi ad Litteram</i> | <i>PL</i> 34:245-486; <i>BA</i> 48-49 | Ch. 6 | Divine Messages |

| | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|--|-------------|--|
| | <i>De Trinitate</i> | PL 42:819-1098; BA 15-16 | Ch. 5 | Site of Epiphany |
| | <i>Epistulae</i> | PL 33:61-1162; CCL 31, 31A, 31B | Ch. 6, 7 | Divine Messages Faith Reinforcement |
| | <i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i> | PL 36-37; CCL 38-40 | Ch. 6 | Divine Messages |
| Basil | <i>Epistulae</i> | PG 31:1785-1790; 32:220-1112 | Ch. 6 | Divine Messages |
| Cyprian | <i>Ad Quirinum</i> | PL 4:675-780; CCL 3:3-179 | Ch. 5 | Site of Epiphany |
| Eusebius | <i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i> | PG 20:45-906; SC. 31; 41; 55; 73 | Ch. 5 | Site of Epiphany |
| | <i>Vita Constantini</i> | PG 20:905-1440; GCS 7 | Ch. 5 | Site of Epiphany |
| Gregory the Great | <i>Dialogorum</i> | PL 77: 149-430; SC 251, 260, 265 | Ch. 7 | Faith Reinforcement |
| | <i>Moralia in Job</i> | PL 75:509-1162B; 76:9-782; SC 32, 22, 212, 476, 525 | Ch. 7 | Faith Reinforcement |
| Hermas | <i>The Shepherd of Hermas</i> | SC 53; Ed. by Michael W. Holmes. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1992, 3rd revised edition, 2007. | Ch. 5, 6, 7 | Site of Epiphany Divine Messages Faith Reinforcement |
| Jerome | <i>Apologia contra Rufinum</i> | PL 23:395-492; SC 303 | Ch. 5 | Site of Epiphany |
| | <i>Epistolae</i> | PL 30:13-308; CSEL 54; 55; 56 | Ch. 5 | Site of Epiphany |

| | | | | |
|-------------------|--|--|-------------|--|
| Justin Martyr | <i>Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo</i> | <i>PG</i> 6:471-803; <i>PTS</i> 47 | Ch. 5 | Site of Epiphany |
| Lactantius | <i>De Moribus Persecutorum</i> | <i>PL</i> 7:189-276; <i>SC</i> . 39 | Ch. 5 | Site of Epiphany |
| Pontius | <i>Vita Cypriani</i> | <i>PL</i> 3:1481-1541; <i>CSEL</i> 3/3 | Ch. 5 | Site of Epiphany |
| Sulpicius Severus | <i>Chronicorum</i> | <i>PL</i> 20:95-160; <i>SC</i> 441 | Ch. 5 | Site of Epiphany |
| | <i>Vita Sancti Martini Turonensis</i> | <i>PL</i> 20: 159-176; <i>SC</i> 133-135 | Ch. 5 | Site of Epiphany |
| Tertullian | <i>Ad Nationes</i> | <i>PL</i> 1:559- 0608; <i>CCL</i> 1:9-77 | Ch. 6 | Divine Messages |
| | <i>Adversus Praxeam</i> | <i>PL</i> 2: 153-196; <i>CCL</i> 2:1157-1205 | Ch. 5 | Site of Epiphany |
| | <i>De Anima</i> | <i>PL</i> 2:641-752; Ed. by J.H. Waszink. Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1947. | Ch. 5, 6 | Site of Epiphany Divine Messages |
| | <i>De Virginitibus Velandis</i> | <i>PL</i> 2:887-914; <i>CCL</i> 2:1207-1226 | Ch. 6 | Divine Messages |
| (Unknown) | <i>Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis</i> | <i>SC</i> 417 | Ch. 5, 6, 7 | Site of Epiphany Divine Messages Faith Reinforcement |

Chapter 1

Dreams as Creations of the Soul and Their Relation to the Doctrine of Man¹

In sleep, the soul acts as if it were present elsewhere and the imitation of absence which is sleep is a preparation for its future departure in death. — Tertullian, *De Anima* 43.12.

Often when the body is quiet, and at rest and asleep, man moves inwardly, and beholds what is outside himself, travelling to foreign lands,... What else could this be except a rational soul? – Athanasius, *Contra Gentes* 31.

For it is in fact mainly by these imaginary sights that the soul is proved to be non-corporeal. — Augustine, *De Natura et Origine Animae* 4.25.

Several Greek and Roman writers (including Aristotle and Cicero)² articulated a theory or explanation of human-inspired dreams³ (the dreams which originate with dreamers themselves) and their mechanics, whereas none of the biblical, deuterocanonical or pseudepigraphic authors ever attempted to do so.⁴ However, at least four church fathers, Tertullian, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine, determined to be the counterparts of the former group, rather than follow in the

¹ An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the Third British National Patristic Conference at University of Durham in 2010.

² Aristotle, *De Insomniis* 458a33-462b11 (ed. D. Gallop, 84-104); Cicero, *De Divinatione*, 1.29.61-30.65; 2.58.119-20; 2.62.128-69.143 (*LCL* 154.292-4; 504-6; 514-30).

³ “Human-inspired dream(s)” hereafter in this chapter referred to as “dream(s),” unless specifically stated otherwise.

⁴ For discussion, see Appendix B and C of this thesis.

footsteps of the latter. These church fathers endeavoured to conceptualise dreams and theorise dream phenomena. They conceived of dreams as the products of the human soul's movement. For them, dreams emanated from the soul's operation or imagination, and their mechanics closely related to its activities. Dreams even ontologically testified to the existence and action of the soul.

Yet, unlike Greco-Roman writers, these church fathers did not formulate a dream theory or explicate the phenomena of dreams simply for an oneirological purpose. In fact, their real agenda for doing so was to promulgate Christian doctrines, particularly the doctrine of man. Methodologically, they interpreted dreams so as to illuminate the doctrine. Hermeneutically, they integrated the doctrine into their theory or explanation of dreams. Their oneirology attended to the doctrine, while the doctrine orientated their oneiric exposition.

In this chapter, I argue that the nature of human-inspired dreams in the writings of these church fathers can be regarded as the creations of the soul's movement. I also demonstrate both the methodological connection and hermeneutical reciprocity between dreams and the doctrine of man in their texts.

1. Tertullian

Tertullian was the first Christian theologian to construct a coherent theory of dreams and their mechanics, as proposed in his apologetic work *De Anima*. In his fourfold dream typology, the third class consisted of normal and natural dreams inspired by humans, or more precisely by dreamers' souls.⁵ He defined this type of

⁵ The other three types of dreams are: demon-inspired dreams, divined-inspired dreams and "ecstasy"-inspired dreams. *De Anima* 47.1-4 (ed. J.H. Waszink, 65-6). Tertullian's dream classification, and in particular his theories of the soul and dreams, are indebted heavily to Stoic conceptions (perhaps transmitted by Soranus, as Waszink speculates) but very slightly to the thoughts of other Christian writers. *De Anima* 26.3; 43.2-5; 46.11 (ed. Waszink, 37; 58-9; 64-5). Waszink, *Tertulliani De*

dream as the “accidents (*accidentibus*)” of sleep (the attendant or contingent events of sleep) which are engendered by the soul’s movement.⁶

According to Tertullian, “the soul dreams.”⁷ When the body reposes in sleep, the soul, while still remaining in the body,⁸ acts by its own faculties.⁹ The imaginary activities of the soul, such as traveling over land and sea, labouring, playing, rejoicing or pursuing lawful or unlawful things, then form the images or content of dreams. The dreamer’s soul not only produces dreams, but also remembers them, so that the dreamer can recall them and ponder their meanings after awaking.¹⁰

Some dreams appear to be insane because the dreamer’s mental function is affected and becomes dull through the power of “ecstasy (*ecstasis*).” The power not only brings rest to the body and enables its sleep to be initiated, but also prevents the soul from resting and spurs it into dreaming.¹¹ For Tertullian, the soul issued dreams

Anima (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1947), 216, 461, 481, 497, 500; Martine Dulaey, *Le Rêve dans la vie et la pensée de saint Augustin* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1973), 55-6.

⁶ *De Anima* 45.1 (ed. Waszink, 62).

⁷ *Ibid.* 43.12 (ed. Waszink, 60; trans. E.A. Quain, *FC* 10.278).

⁸ No matter how real the soul’s experience or activity of traveling outside the body during sleep may seem to be, Tertullian rejected the idea that during sleep the soul leaves from the body. *De Anima* 44.1-2 (ed. Waszink, 61). Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.32 (*SC* 136.74-6); Gregory of Nyssa, *De Hominis Opificio* 14.2; 27.2; 29.1-11 (ed. G.H. Forbes, 190; 268-70; 282-90).

⁹ For Tertullian, the soul has its own perceptual senses, limbs and organs which it uses in the operation of dreaming and all activity in dreams. *De Anima* 9; 14; 38 (ed. Waszink, 10-2; 17-8; 54-5). Similarly, Irenaeus maintained that in dreams the soul sees things “by her own instrumentality.” Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 2.33.1; 2.33.3 (*SC* 294.344-6; 294.348-50). Yet Augustine bitterly disputed Tertullian’s idea. Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram* 10.25.41-42 (*BA* 49.220). For Origen, the dreamer uses the sensations of his mind, rather than those of his soul, to see and hear in dreams. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.48 (*SC* 132.200). Also see Aristotle, *De Insomniis* 458a33-460b22 (ed. Gallop, 84-96); and Plutarch, *Dialogue on Love* 19, in *Moralia* 764E (“...the soul has seen in dreams...” *LCL* 425.400).

¹⁰ *De Anima* 43.12; 45.5-6 (ed. Waszink, 60-1; 62). Irenaeus also noted that the soul will remember the content of dreams and then communicate them to the body. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 2.33.1 (*SC* 294.344-6).

¹¹ *De Anima* 43.12; 45.3-6 (ed. Waszink, 60-1; 62). Tertullian’s idea that “ecstasy” is involved in the function of sleep and production of dreams was very likely original and a completely new notion in his time. However, strangely enough, he argued that the (third-class) dreams are created simply by the human soul and thus are aptly labeled as fully natural and normal (45.3; 47.3 [ed. Waszink, 62; 65-6]). He then drew the power of ecstasy, the power bestowed by the divine (11.4; 21.2; 45.3; 48.4), into the scene. But how can dreams be natural and normal if they are affected by the divine power of ecstasy? An unnatural or even unnecessary element (i.e. ecstasy) seems to be imposed into the operation of human-soul-inspired dreams. Here, his intention of deliberately relating ecstasy to dreams (and also later to prophetic dreams, described in chapter 46 [ed. Waszink, 62-5]), explicitly reflects his

in order that they could ontologically witness the soul's being and locomotion. The existence, integrity and normal function of the infant's soul from the very beginning of life could even be confirmed by the phenomena of the infant's dreaming. Hence, everyone who has the soul has dreams, and vice versa. If some people never dream, then there must be something wrong "in the constitution of their soul."¹²

Moreover, in Tertullian's oneirology, dreams inseparably pertain to the doctrine of man. He asserted that "the things we see are merely the image of the hidden realities (*facies occultorum ea quae apparent*)."¹³ God helps our faith more readily by setting images and allegories before us which can promote a better understanding of Christian tenets.¹⁴ Sleep, dreaming and dreams could all reflect and elucidate hidden truths, especially the truths concerning the Christian beliefs of man's death and resurrection, and of the activity of man's immortal soul in the interval.

Tertullian pointed out that sleep is "the mirror of death (*speculo mortis*)". Man's sleep symbolises man's death.¹⁵ In sleep, a man's soul acts as if it were present elsewhere (e.g. traveling over land and sea). On these occasions, the soul's "imitation of the absence" (for the soul somehow seems to be not present in the body)¹⁶ is allegorically a preparation for its future departure from the body in death,

Montanist disposition, endeavouring to "commend the ecstatic state" and to show that the power of ecstasy, "in which prophecy consists (21.2 [ed. Waszink, 29-30])," is permeated everywhere, even in people's dreams. See Timothy Barnes, *Tertullian* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971, reprint, 2005), 43-44, 77.

¹² *De Anima* 26.1-27.9; 49.1-2 (ed. Waszink, 37-9; 67).

¹³ Ibid. 18.12 (ed. Waszink, 26; trans. Quain, 222). Tertullian said that he quoted this assertion from Plato. However it cannot be found in the extant Plato's works. It may be adduced from Sextus Empiricus. See Waszink, *Tertulliani*, 267.

¹⁴ *De Anima* 43.12 (ed. Waszink, 60-1).

¹⁵ Ibid. 50.1; 42.3 (ed. Waszink, 67; 58). Tertullian also discussed that Adam's sleep symbolised Christ's death. Ibid. 43.10 (ed. Waszink, 60). Cf. Augustine, *De Natura et Origine Animae* 4.18.28 (BA 22.640: "*consanguineus leti sopor*") and Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6.278 ("*consanguineus Leti Sopor*" [LCL 63.552]).

¹⁶ As Waszink remarks, "during sleep the soul remains in the body, but it conceals its presence." Waszink, *Tertulliani*, 471.

the separation of the body and soul. Likewise, the state that the body reposes immovably in sleep parallels both the condition when it was lying before its life was formed, awaiting the soul's bestowal, and the condition when it is dying at last, awaiting the soul's withdrawal. Additionally, the fact that sleep is solely the property of the body, not the soul, resembles the truth that death appertains to the body alone.¹⁷ Tertullian hence remarked, "By the image of death [i.e. man's sleep] you are introduced to faith, you nourish hope, you learn both how to live and die, you learn watchfulness even when you are asleep."¹⁸

Furthermore, Tertullian construed the phenomena of people awakening from dreaming as a metaphorical symbol of the resurrection of the dead. In his opinion, death signified the divorce of the body and soul, and resurrection the union of them. If sleep represents demise, then waking from sleep stands for resurrection.¹⁹ Indeed, on the one hand, the soul which seems to depart from the body in sleep reunites with the body at the end of dreaming as it does at the body's resurrection. On the other hand, the body reposes in sleep; yet when it awakes from dreaming, it reanimates as it does after its resurrection from death.

When the soul escapes from its bondage of the flesh after the body's decease, it finds itself enjoying liberation. In this liberty "it regains its divinity as a man awaking from sleep and passing from shadows to realities." Correspondingly, when one's body shakes off its slumber, it portrays before one's eyes the resurrection of the dead.²⁰ Here, man's awakening from sleep becomes a trope for explaining man's resurrection.

¹⁷ *De Anima* 27.2; 43.11-12; 46.12; 51.1; 58.3 (ed. Waszink, 38; [quotation from] 60-61; 65; 68-9; 78-9).

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 43.12 (ed. Waszink, 61; trans. Quain, 278).

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 27.2; 51.1 (ed. Waszink, 38; 68-9). Cf. Luke 8:55.

²⁰ *De Anima* 53.6 (ed. Waszink, 72; trans. Quain, 296); also 43.12 (ed. Waszink, 60-1).

In addition to sleep and dreaming, dreams were also used figuratively by Tertullian to clarify the immortality of man's soul. For him, man's soul neither rests nor surrenders to the power of sleep. On account of its immortal nature and constant motion, the soul operates day and night.²¹ During the body's sleep, the soul attentively contemplates things, and also yields dreams which can edify or disclose hidden truths.²² Dreams therefore manifest not only the dynamics of the soul, but also its perpetual locomotion which "is a proof of its divine quality and immortality."²³

Dreams were deemed by Tertullian as the creations of the human soul's movement. He doctrinally converted sleep, dreaming and dreams into figurative symbols, which contain hidden verities and messages beyond their literal meanings, in order to illuminate the doctrine of man. While the former two are transformed into models of man's death and resurrection, the latter one is allegorised as the activities of man's soul in the interim between the two events. The three states of human life within a day—waking, sleeping and dreaming—thus foreshadow the outlines of the beginning and end of the entire life, as well as afterlife.

Tertullian was truly a dream theorist, not merely a dream interpreter,²⁴ inasmuch as he conceptualised the mechanics of dreaming and dreams. Yet of more significance to later Christian dream theorists was his methodology, in which the

²¹ Cf. Cicero, *De Divinatione* 2.62.128 (LCL 154.514).

²² Ibid. 43.5; 47.3 (ed. Waszink, 59; 65-6); also *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 18.8 (CCL 2.943).

²³ *De Anima* 45.1 (ed. Waszink, 62; trans. P. Holmes, ANF 3.223). Also see Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.9.82 (SC108.162; trans. S. P. Wood, FC 23.163) in which Clement wrote that "it is not the soul that needs sleep for it is ceaselessly active." Ambrose in his *De Virginibus* 2.2.8 (SAEMO 14/1.170-1) remarked that when the body of the Virgin Mary was sleeping, her soul was constantly active, for example, reading or carrying out tasks interrupted by sleep. For a discussion of Tertullian's theory of the soul and dreams, see L. S. Nasrallah, "An Ecstasy of Folly" (Cambridge: Harvard Theological Studies, 2003), 51-8; 95-127.

²⁴ For an example of Tertullian's interpretation of dreams, see his *De Virginibus Velandis* 17 (CCL 2.1225-6).

phenomena of dreams were doctrinalised so as to expound or undergird Christian doctrine. Coincidentally the doctrine was elaborately integrated into the explication of dreams in order to formulate a Christianised dream theory in which the doctrine and the explication are intertwined and concordant.²⁵ Tertullian's view of dreams, his idea of using the phenomena of dreams as symbols for Christian doctrines, and in particular his doctrinalisation approach to the subject, became the beacon, if not the norm, of patristic oneirology for many church fathers to come.²⁶

2. Athanasius

Athanasius described his conception of the mechanics of dreaming and dreams in his dogmatic work *Contra Gentes*. According to him, the human soul is rational. Dreams arise out of the rational soul's activity during the body's slumber. When the body is asleep, "man moves (κινεῖται) inwardly and beholds what is outside himself, traveling to foreign lands" and meeting "the saints and angels who are above earthly and no longer in their earthly body."²⁷ Athanasius concluded, "What else could this be except a rational soul (ἡ ψυχὴ λογικὴ)?"²⁸ Based on Athanasius' theory, it is the inward movement of a dreamer's rational soul that generates what the dreamer sees and experiences.

²⁵ Tertullian's oneirological methodology (approach to dreams) is the key to recovering and understanding his view of dreams. In this respect, Patricia Miller's analysis of Tertullian's dream theory may be incorrect or reductive, for she does not follow his methodology to retrace his thoughts concerning dreams and his original intention for constructing dream theory. The same problem also occurs in her analysis of the dream theory of Gregory of Nyssa whose methodology is similar (if not the same) to Tertullian's. Patricia Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 66-70; 47-51.

²⁶ For this reason, Tertullian can be regarded as the most prominent luminary in the field of patristic oneirology. Dulaey and Amat have traced the trajectory of the profound influence of Tertullian's views of both sleep and dreams on later church fathers, including Arnobius, Lactantius, and Jerome. See Dulaey, *Le Rêve*, 55-68; Jacqueline Amat, *Songes et Visions* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1985), 103-115.

²⁷ Athanasius, *Contra Gentes* 31; 33 (ed. and trans. R.W. Thomson, 86; 90).

²⁸ Ibid. 31 (ed. and trans. Thomson, 86). Cf. John of Damascus, *De Fidei Orthodoxa* 2.21 (PTS 12.87) in which John commented that the rational part of the soul holds discussions in dreams.

Like Tertullian, Athanasius also deliberately connected dreams to the doctrine of man. His views concerning dreams appear in several chapters of *Contra Gentes*, which chiefly illustrates the doctrine of man to both believers and pagans, mainly arguing that the human soul is rational and immortal. According to his doctrine, what distinguishes a man from an animal is his rational soul's use of the faculty of reason. "Only man can reason about what lies outside himself" and "about things not actually present."²⁹ Athanasius went on to make the case that, while their bodies are still at rest in bed, humans by virtue of the capacity of their rational soul contemplate not only things outside the home land, but also those "superterrestrial" and eternal.³⁰ Specifically, the rational soul still reasons in night as it does in day.

Furthermore, Athanasius regarded the fact that the temporal dreamer can reflect on heavenly and eternal things as one indication of the human soul being immortal. Another indication was that the soul could spontaneously move itself without resort to the body or other force (e.g. the power of "ecstasy" in Tertullian's dream theory). Athanasius then brought the operation of dreams into play in his argument. For him, dreams, the products of the soul's movement during the body's sleep, plainly demonstrated that the soul moves itself efficiently and productively without the body's assistance.³¹ If the soul can be spontaneously self-moving while the body is lying motionless in bed, it "must necessarily live on after the death of the body."³² The body surely dies without the soul (for the condition of death arises through the soul's withdrawal from the body),³³ yet the soul can live without the

²⁹ *Contra Gentes* 31 (ed. and trans. Thomson, 84).

³⁰ Ibid. 33 (ed. Thomson, 90).

³¹ In the anthropology of either Tertullian (see above footnote 9) or Athanasius, the soul by its own faculties operates so independent of the body during the body's sleep that the dreamer's soul can be called an autonomous entity.

³² Ibid. 33 (ed. and trans. Thomson, 90).

³³ Ibid. 3; 33 (ed. Thomson, 8-10; 88-92). Cf. James 2:26; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 7.12

body, just as the soul can meet immortal angels in dreams without the body's patronage. Here the mechanics of dreams authenticates the immortality of man.

In Athanasius' oneirology, dreams are esteemed as the outworking of the movement of man's rational soul. Concurrently, in his anthropology, dreams turn into a proof of the human soul as both rational and immortal, and therefore evidence of what differentiates humans from animals.³⁴ Although the content of dreams teems with both the mortal and matters absurd or illogical, dreams and their phenomena were adroitly interpreted by Athanasius to comport with his doctrine of man. Patently, his view of dreams serves the doctrine, while the doctrine bleeds into his explanation of dreams.

3. Gregory of Nyssa

In chapter thirteen of his doctrinal treatise *De Hominis Opificio* (*On the Making of Man*), Gregory of Nyssa explained the mechanics of dreaming and dreams in terms of natural phenomena. Dreams were simply products of the human soul, rather than divine, angels or demons.³⁵ Contrary to Athanasius's view, Gregory maintained that dream operation is molded in the irrational part of the soul (τῷ ἀλογωτέρῳ τῆς ψυχῆς). Therefore, dreamers are often in "absurd and impossible situations, which would not happen if the soul were then guided by reason and intellect."³⁶ Similarly to Aristotle,³⁷ Gregory perceived the content of dreams as

(SC 428.216-48); Gregory of Nyssa, *De Hominis Opificio* 29.5 (ed. Forbes, 286).

³⁴ Cf. Lactantius, *De Opificio Dei* 18 (CSEL 27/1.58-9) in which Lactantius posited that animals also dream as humans do..

³⁵ Guy Stroumsa has observed that "not only God, but also Satan is strikingly absent" from Gregory's "positivistic" analysis of dreams. Guy Stroumsa, *Barbarian Philosophy: The Religious Revolution of Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 221.

³⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *De Hominis Opificio* 13.5 (ed. Forbes, 178; trans. Moore, NPNF 5.401).

³⁷ Aristotle, *De Insomniis* 461-462 (ed. Gallop, 96-104). For discussion, see Appendix A of this thesis.

shadows and echoes of those things which happen in our waking moments, and are memorised by, or impressed upon, the soul. While the mind and sense repose, some shadows in the reminiscent portion of the soul appear as dreams.³⁸

But why did Gregory suggest this view (i.e. dreams as products of the irrational part of the soul) which diverged from the view of other church fathers mentioned in this chapter (i.e. dreams as products of the rational soul)? More curiously, in this treatise he centrally argued that humans are made after the image and the likeness of God; their nature is more precious than that of any other creatures, and they have dominion power over all other creatures, due to possession of the rational soul held only by humans, and not by plants or animals.³⁹ Yet, why in this chapter did Gregory contend that it was the disposition of the soul's irrationality which provoked dreams?

Gregory's primary purpose for doing so was to articulate two ideas for the doctrine of man: the correlation between the soul and body, and the significance of sleep to humans. To begin with, in his anthropology, man consists of the soul (managing the activities of sense and perception as well as exercising reason) and body (containing organs and faculties of mind, sense and perception). The human soul is intellectual and immaterial; it mingles with the material body by the agency of

³⁸ *De Hominis* 13.5-17 (ed. Forbes, 178-88; trans. Moore, 401-2). Gregory of Nazianzus said that dreams "simply reproduce one's daily preoccupations" in his *De Rebus Suis*, 2.1.1.290-1 (PG 37.991-2). John Chrysostom also stated that dream images originate from what people see or think about when they are awake. John Chrysostom, *De Penitentia* Homily 1.1 (PG 49.277; trans. G.G. Christo, FC 96.2 [column 1.4]); *Homiliae in Matthaeum* 42.4 (PG 57.456).

³⁹ *De Hominis* 8.1-8; 15.1-16.9; 30.32-33 (ed. Forbes, 138-48; 190-202; 316-8). In Gregory's opinion, man possesses not only the power of the "vegetative soul" (which holds the capacity for subsistence and growth) and the "sensible soul" (which manages the activity of sense and perception) but also that of the "rational soul." What distinguishes human beings from other creatures is their ability for reason exercised by the rational soul. However, this does not mean that man has three souls. Rather, man has only one soul which has a tripartite nature, holding the abilities of both vegetative soul and sensible soul as well as the power of reason. Ibid. 14.2-15.2 (ed. Forbes, 190). Hence, William Moore is wrong in his assertion that in Gregory's theory man possesses the rational soul as well as the vegetative and the sensible soul. William Moore, "Note on the Treatise 'On the Making of Man'," in *NPNF* 5.386.

the senses. They are united as one from the very beginning of a person's birth to the moment of his death. The soul exists neither antecedent nor posterior to the body.⁴⁰ One cannot grow and function well without the other's participation and involvement. They are impartibly connected together and equally important. In a waking state, they co-operate in thinking, moving and working. At night when the body sleeps, the soul also slumbers.⁴¹

In sleep, however, some parts of the body (e.g. the heart and lungs) and the soul (e.g. the irrational part of the soul) keep active while others, such as the mind, sense and rational soul, become quiescent. This is because "in sleep the supremacy of these faculties [i.e. the mind and the rational soul] is in some way reversed in us, and while the irrational (τοῦ ἀλογωτέρου) becomes supreme, the operation of the other ceases indeed..."⁴² Consequently, what dreamers see actually results from the activity of the irrational faculties of man, and thus often appears to be preposterous and illogical.⁴³

For Gregory, the soul and body were so closely correlated that their dominant faculties even reposed together in sleep, while the subordinate ones took over the functions of the body, including breathing, dreaming and the production of dreams, particularly those which were absurd or shadowy. It is now evident that Gregory's

⁴⁰ Gregory believed that the notion of the pre-existence of souls was derived from the heathen belief of transmigration of souls, and also that the notion of the pre-existence of the body would lead to the fabulous doctrine that "the flesh is more noble than the soul" because "that which was previously formed [is more noble] than that which was afterwards infused into it." *De Hominis* 28.1-8 (quotation from 28.1 [ed. Forbes, 276; trans. Moore, 419]). Also see *De Anima et Resurrectione* (PG 46.125; trans. V.W. Callahan, FC 58.254), "But no intelligent man would suppose that the birth of souls occurs later or earlier than the formation of bodies...". Cf. Origen's pre-existentism, see *De Principiis* 2.8.1-2.9.8 (SC 252.336-72).

⁴¹ *De Hominis* 14.2; 27.2; 29.1-11 (ed. Forbes, 190; 268-70; 282-90); cf. *De Anima et Resurrectione* (PG 46.125-8).

⁴² *De Hominis* 13.7 (ed. Forbes, 180; trans. Moore, 401). This explanation of the soul and dreaming resembles that of Plato. See Plato, *Republic* 9.571-572 (LCL 276.334-40). Also Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.9.80 (SC 108.158-60) in which Clement remarked that the oppression of sleep is like death forcing us into insensibility.

⁴³ *De Hominis* 13.5-6; 30.15-18 (ed. Forbes, 178-80; 302-4).

ingenious view of dreams as products of the irrational part of the soul skillfully corroborates his argument for the indivisible correlation between the soul and body.⁴⁴

Secondly, in Gregory's doctrine of man, sleep plays a critical role in the body's assimilation of nutrition and the operation of reason. According to his doctrine, man must sleep in order that "the nutriment may be diffused over the whole body through the passages which it contains, without any strain to hinder its progress." During rest, when the senses altogether cease from the operation of motion, "the digestive processes of nutriment may have free course for transmission by the vapours through each of the passages."⁴⁵ Besides, acquisition of nutrition is so vital to the soul that when the soul rests, "the nutritive part of it alone is operative during sleep."⁴⁶ Without introducing nourishment, the body and soul cannot subserve the continuance of life. Without sleep, they cannot import the nutritive supplies from without. In order to survive, both must slumber.

Moreover, the function of reason also necessitates sleep. Exertion of perceptive senses procures a strain on both the body and soul. Sleep can quell the strain by "giving the perceptive faculties rest for the time from their operations,

⁴⁴ Gregory's view of the correlation between the body and soul in sleep radically conflicts with that of either Tertullian or Athanasius, who reckoned the relation to be vague and weak, rather than close. See above footnote 31. In respect of this correlation, Stroumsa has named Gregory's approach as "the psychosomatic understanding of dreams." Stroumsa, *Barbarian Philosophy*, 220-1. However, Stroumsa's analysis of Gregory's theory seems to ignore the significant role of the irrational part of the soul in the operation of dreams in Gregory's oneirological system. For a succinct description of the relation between the soul and body in Gregory's anthropology, see John Cavaros (who considers Gregory, in comparison to other church fathers of his time, as the most "scientific" theologian in the manner of describing this relation), "The Relation of Body and Soul in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa." In *Gregor von Nyssa und Die Philosophie*, ed. by Heinrich Dörrie (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 60-78. For a thorough study of Gregory's doctrine of man or human nature, see Johannes Zachhuber, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa* (Leiden: Brill, 2000). However, both Cavaros and Zachhuber never mention anything about Gregory's analysis of the correlation between the soul and body by means of interpreting the phenomena of dreams and dreaming, the analysis which was the original and probably the most creative one on the subject in the patristic period.

⁴⁵ *De Hominis* 13.3 (ed. Forbes, 176; trans. Moore, 400).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 13.6 (ed. Forbes, 178; trans. Moore, 401).

loosing them like horses from the chariots after the race.”⁴⁷ Sleep thus stabilises the working of intellect the following day. In order to reason properly, the body and even the soul must slumber.⁴⁸

Gregory then employed the phenomena of dreams in order to buttress his theory of man’s sleep. For him, the fact that dreams often appear as “fantastic nonsense (φαντασιώδεις φλυαρίαις)” reflects the fact that the mind, sense and the rational part of the soul do not engage in the formation of dreams at all.⁴⁹ Dreams therefore testify that the major parts of a dreamer’s body and soul are totally at rest during sleep for the purposes of assimilating nourishment and maintaining the normal operation of reason. From the phenomena and content of dreams Gregory found strong evidence for his conviction. It is also from here that he offered one of the earliest Christian theories of alimentology and somnological regimen.⁵⁰

Gregory considered dreams to be the derivatives of the (irrational) soul’s activity. Although he adopted an approach to the phenomena of dreams which differed radically from those adopted by the church fathers, who also regarded dreams as products of the soul, and although his approach brought about a view which negatively indicated dreams as preposterous or futile, and also which was probably incompatible with the dream theories of those church fathers, his ultimate aspiration coincided with their intentions (including Athanasius’), as they all purported to expound their Christian anthropology. Again, Gregory’s articulation of the rationale of dreams clearly works in support of his doctrine of man, while at the

⁴⁷ Ibid. 13.2 (ed. Forbes, 174; trans. Moore, 400).

⁴⁸ Whereas many church fathers (e.g. Tertullian and Athanasius, see above) maintained that the soul never rests (or needs no rest), Gregory believed that it needs to take rest as the body does. *De Hominis* 13.6-7 (ed. Forbes, 178-80).

⁴⁹ Ibid. 13.5-7 (ed. Forbes, 178-80).

⁵⁰ The earliest Christian theory of somnology was very likely proposed by Tertullian. See Tertullian, *De Anima* 42-4 (ed. Waszink, 58-61).

same time the doctrinal notions and terminology are incorporated into his dream theory.

4. Augustine

Unlike Tertullian, Augustine was less interested in formulating a coherent dream theory. However, through dispersed discussions of dreams in several doctrinal treatises, he conveyed his notions of the mechanics of dreams and their phenomena. Augustine also recognised dreams as the images constituted by the soul's movement. In his early writing *De Quantitate Animae* (circa 388 A.D.), he inferred that at regular intervals the soul withdraws itself from the senses so as to restore their vigor. Meanwhile, it combines manifold images of realities which it has absorbed through the senses. This is what "constitutes sleep and dreams."⁵¹

In *De Genesi ad Litteram* (circa 414 A.D.) and *De Natura et Origine Animae* (circa 419 A.D.), Augustine gave a further exposition of the mechanics of dreams. He proposed that dream images in the first instance are formed in the thoughts of people either through actually seeing or mentally imagining when they are awake, and are held in the depths of their memories. While their bodies are sleeping, their souls then gather the images "out of these secret recesses (*ex eius abditissimis sinibus*)" (i.e. out of their memories), by some ineffable process and in a mysterious way, to create what they see in dreams.⁵² According to Augustine, we can know nothing about

⁵¹ *De Quantitate Animae* 33.71 (BA 5.376). Dulaey suggests that Augustine borrowed this idea from Cicero's *De Divinatione* 2.62.128 and 2.67.139 (LCL 154.514 and 154.524-6). Dulaey's opinion is adopted by Le Goff. Dulaey, *Le Rêve*, 76; Le Goff, *L'imaginaire Médiéval* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 298. However, Dulaey's suggestion is untenable. Firstly, in this chapter Augustine argued about the soul's power and magnitude, whereas Cicero in *De Divinatione* 2.62.128 and 2.67.139 demonstrated the soul's weakness. More importantly, Augustine emphasised the soul's role and work of combining images to produce dreams. Yet Cicero never spoke of the soul's merit in making dreams. By comparison, Augustine's idea bears a closer resemblance to that of Tertullian, Athanasius or Gregory of Nyssa than to that of Cicero.

⁵² *De Genesi ad Litteram* 10.25.42 (BA 49.220-2); *De Natura et Origine Animae* 4.17.25 (BA

dreams or their mechanics (for they are bred in a mysterious way) except for the fact that they are derived from the soul's operation, in which the soul naturally combines the images out of the dreamer's memory to compose the content of dreams.

Augustine too propounded his idea of dreams so as to diffuse or defend his understanding of the Christian doctrine. In his dream discourses or interpretations, Augustine primarily dealt with two issues concerning the doctrine of man: the incorporeity of the human soul, and the incapability of the dead to intervene in the affairs of the living.

In his *De Natura et Origine Animae*,⁵³ Augustine argued by means of a discourse on dreams that man's soul is spiritual and insubstantial, rather than corporeal.⁵⁴ He stated that the dream images we see appear to be real, and the body through which we act in dreams seems to be a veritable flesh. Yet, whatever we see or do in dreams can never be corporeal or carried out by our corporeal faculties. It is by "the very similitude of the body" that the soul in dreams moves and beholds things.⁵⁵

Likewise, the soul can genuinely feel pain or suffer as the body does, but this implies neither that it does so by the same means as the body's substance, nor that it

22.632; trans. *NPNF* 5.365); also *Epistula* 159.1-2 (*CSEL* 44.497-499). For Augustine, the source of dream images originates mainly from those which dreamers have seen in actuality. But In *Epistula* 9.5 (*CCL* 31.22-3), Augustine accented that people in dreams can conceive the images which they have never seen. Cf. Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job* 8.24.42 (*CCL* 143.413-4) and *Dialogorum* 4.50 (*SC* 265.172-6). In Gregory's dream theory, dreams may proceed from the thoughts of people. Le Goff has observed that Isidore of Seville borrowed Gregory's view and typology of dreams to construct his own oneirology. Isidore, *Sententiae* 3.6 (*CCL* 111.215-20); Le Goff, *L'imaginaire Médiéval*, 309.

⁵³ Augustine's composition of this treatise was motivated by Vincentius Victor who wrote two books in which he criticised Augustine's doctrine of the soul. Augustine believed that Victor was influenced by Tertullian regarding the perception of the soul. *De Natura et Origine Animae* 1.1.1; 2.5.9 (*BA* 22.376; 22.474-6). Truly, many arguments of Victor resemble those of Tertullian. See Tertullian, *De Anima*, particularly 3-9 (ed. Waszink, 4-12).

⁵⁴ *Origine Animae* 4.17.25-18.6; 4.13.19 (*BA* 22.630-34; 22.616-8).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 4.17.25 (*BA* 22.630-2); also *Confessiones* 3.6 (*BA* 13.378-84); *De Trinitate* 11.4.7 (*BA* 16.178-80); *De Genesi* 12.2.3 (*BA* 49.332). In *Soliloquiorum* (written about 386-7, probably his earliest writing), Augustine mentioned that people are easily deceived by the "cozening similitude (*similitudine lenocinante*)" of the images in dreams. *Soliloquiorum* 2.6.12 (*BA* 5.110).

has the corporeal senses or faculties for doing so. Rather, it is in its “unreal body (*non uero corpore*)” that the soul feels a “real misery (*uera miseria*)”. The soul may bear the body’s likeness or share a resemblance with its feelings, but may never possess a corresponding corporeity or substance.⁵⁶

Augustine also cited Perpetua’s dream by way of an example. He explained that in her dream Perpetua wrestled with an Egyptian gladiator, after being changed into a man. If the human soul were corporeal, then her soul’s body in the dream would maintain its sexual integrity and would appear as a female warrior.

Undoubtedly, the human soul is insubstantial, and therefore Perpetua’s soul was able to take a man’s form in the dream. Indeed, it was Perpetua’s incorporeal soul in that apparent bodily form battling with the Egyptian man.⁵⁷ No matter how realistic that man’s body in her dream could be, it was not a corporeal body, but an immaterial or spiritual soul.⁵⁸

Augustine continued, “For in your dreams you will appear to yourself as if endued with a body; but it really is not your body, but your soul (*neque id corpus tuum, sed anima tua*); nor is it a real body, but the semblance of a body.”⁵⁹ To Augustine, it was “mainly by these imaginary sights [in dreams] that the soul is proved to be non-corporeal (*de his quippe uisionum imaginibus maxime anima probatur non esse corporea*).”⁶⁰ In other words, from the phenomena of dreams man

⁵⁶ *Origine Animae* 4.17.25; 4.18.27 (BA 22.630-2; 22.634-8).

⁵⁷ Noteworthy, the Egyptian man was actually the incarnate devil according to Perpetua’s dream account. In other words, the incorporeal devil in the dream also took a human form to manifest itself and fight with Perpetua. See *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, 10.6-14 (SC 417.136-42).

⁵⁸ *Origine Animae* 4.18.26 (BA 22.632-4).

⁵⁹ Ibid. 4.21.34 (BA 22.650; trans. NPNF 5.368).

⁶⁰ Ibid. 4.17.25 (BA 22.630; trans. NPNF 5.365). It seems to be a paradox that on the one hand Augustine considered the sights in Perpetua’s dream as imaginary, but on the other he insisted that Perpetua’s fighting with the devil in the dream was real. Yet what Augustine contended here is that both Perpetua’s body (as well as the devil’s body, the Egyptian man) in her dream and the dream images were incorporeal. With regard to her fighting, because it did take place spiritually, though not

can discern the immaterial nature of his soul; he can also see his invisible soul (due to its immaterial nature) only in dreams where it appears visibly in the similitude of a body's form.

Augustine therefore proclaimed that if his antagonist (i.e. Vincentius Victor) could recognise the things he saw in dreams as merely resemblances, and not real substances, then their dispute over the incorporeity of man's soul would be resolved. His antagonist could never recover from his error until he could fully and calmly examine dreams.⁶¹

But what was the significance of the doctrinal idea of man's soul as spiritual and insubstantial for Augustine, who had exploited dream discourses to elucidate this idea? Firstly, in Augustine's opinion, the soul must be incorporeal so that it cannot be killed by those who kill the material body, as the Lord Himself plainly declares (Matt 10:28). For the same reason, the soul of Perpetua's brother Dinocrates could not at any rate have died of the blow which killed his body. What Perpetua saw in her dream was the likeness of the killed body of Dinocrates, rather than his soul.

Accordingly, the idea that the soul is a material entity carries an implication that

physically, it was real (in the spiritual sense), and so was her victory and reward. *Origine Animae* 4.17.25-18.26 (BA 22.630-4); also see Augustine, *Sermones* 280.2-4 (PL 38:1281-3). However, here a problem regarding man's nature as an entity comprised of the two inseparable parts, the body and the soul, may arise from Augustine's interpretation of Perpetua's dream. Augustine said that while Perpetua's body was sleeping in the prison, her soul which appeared as a male warrior was tussling elsewhere with the devil exposed in the form of an Egyptian gladiator. Both the fighting by her soul and the repose of her body were real and happened concurrently (*Origine Animae* 4.18.26 [BA 22.632-4]). Specifically, her soul and the body were disconnected, each doing something in different places. In this regard, the impartibility between man's soul and body before man's death is ambiguous, and so is man's unity. Although Augustine upheld the traditional notion that the soul and body cannot separate until death (e.g. *Origine Animae* 4.2.3 [BA 22.574-8] and *De Genesi* 12.5.14 [BA 49.344-6]), his interpretation of Perpetua's dream may conflict with this notion and thus may imperil his anthropology. Nonetheless, the reason why Augustine was not concerned about this problem (for he did not give further explanation) may be that in his thought, dreams can be shared by both the soul and body simultaneously. That is, if Perpetua's dream (which was produced by her soul's activity) was somehow being transmitted to and perceived by her body's senses or faculties, then it could establish the connection between her soul and body in some way while they were separately doing something. If so, dreams, in Augustine's anthropology, become the only way by which man's soul and body coalesces in sleep, in which man's unity depends on the oneiric adhesion.

⁶¹ *Origine Animae* 4.18.27-8 (BA 22.634-40).

undermines the Lord's teaching.⁶²

Secondly, God, "the Author of the soul (*animae auctorem*)," is incorporeal and can be called "a spirit (*spiritus*)".⁶³ God created the soul in His incorporeal likeness. The soul should be recognised as spiritual as God is recognised as spiritual, rather than material. On the other hand, if the soul is corporeal, how can it receive, or be made in, the image of a spiritual God?⁶⁴ Unless the soul has such a nature of incorporeality, it can neither bear nor conform to the likeness of the immaterial God.⁶⁵

Finally, in Augustine's Anthropology, "the whole man consists of spirit, soul and body."⁶⁶ In some biblical passages (e.g. Gen 2:7), the soul and spirit are combined together under the designation of soul, while in others (e.g. John 19:30), they are described as one under the name of spirit. In a broad sense, the spirit comprehends the soul and the soul the spirit. They are of one and the same essence. Both the soul and spirit are incorporeal and share the same homogeneous nature, whereas the body does not have the essence of either the soul or spirit. It is hard to discriminate between the former two due to their homogeneity, but is easier to differentiate the later one from the former due to its material substance. Hence, the soul must be immaterial, like the spirit.⁶⁷

⁶² Ibid. 4.18.27 (BA 22.634-8).

⁶³ Ibid. 3.3.3; 4.23.37 (BA 22.524; 22.660); Cf. *Confessiones*, 3.6.10; 5.10.19; 7.1.1 (BA 13.378-82; 13.498; 13.576-8).

⁶⁴ *Origine Animae* 4.14.20 (BA 22.622). This idea may indicate that in Augustine's presupposition, it is neither the body nor the whole man, but the soul which is made in the image of God, after the likeness of God.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 4.12.18 (BA 22.614-6); *De Genesi* 10.24.40 (BA 49.216-8). For Augustine's discussion of the relation between the nature of the soul and that of incorporeal God, also see *Origine Animae* 2.5.9; 4.14.20; 4.23.37 (BA 22.474-6; 22.504-8; 22.656-62).

⁶⁶ Ibid. 2.2.2; 4.2.3 (BA 22.458; trans. NPNF 5.331; BA 22.576).

⁶⁷ Ibid. 2.2.2; 4.13.19; 4.22.36-4.23.37 (BA 22.458-60; 22.616-8; 22.654-62); *De Genesi* 12.7.18 (BA 49.352-4).

Furthermore, if the soul is corporeal (as Victor asserted)⁶⁸, then a whole man will have two bodies, the visible (outside) flesh and the soul's body, both of which need food and water as physical sustenance.⁶⁹ This fallacious idea also suggests that when a man beholds himself in his dreams, he is seeing his soul's true corporeity in the real form of body with limbs, which the soul itself possesses. The soul by its own legs can run here and there on real solid ground in dreams. If a man dreams that he flies, then this signifies that his soul's body has wings like a bird and holds the capacity for flying.⁷⁰

To Augustine, this kind of ludicrous idea would corrupt the biblical contention about man's soul. It also put man's nature and constitution in an untenable position and involved a fundamental contradiction, which could seriously jeopardise Christian anthropology or the doctrine of man. Up to this point, we have observed how Augustine doctrinalised dreams (especially Perpetua's dream), while using dreams to articulate his doctrinal idea.

The other issue which concerned Augustine in his dream texts is whether or not the dead have the power to intervene in the affairs of the living. The belief that the souls of the dead can appear in the dreams of the living, and thus take part in their lives, greatly prevailed among ancient Greeks and Romans, as did the cult of the dead.⁷¹ Yet, Augustine wholly rejected this idea, most notably in his *De Cura pro*

⁶⁸ Victor, like Tertullian, used Luke 16:22-24, 1 Thess 5:23 and Perpetua's dream narratives to support his argument. See Augustine, *Origine Animae* 2.4.8; 2.10.14; 4.13.19; 4.18.26 (BA 22.470-2; 22.488-92; 22.618; 22.632-4).

⁶⁹ Ibid. 2.4.8; 4.13.19-14.20 (BA 22.470-2; 22.616-22).

⁷⁰ This is because Augustine presumed that if one appears in one's own dream, what one sees in the dream are one's soul and its activities. Ibid. 4.17.25; 4.21.34 (BA 22.630-2; 22.650-2); *De Genesi* 10.25.41-43 (BA 49.220-2).

⁷¹ Augustine also cited the dream account recorded in Vergil's *Aeneid* (6.337-383 [LCL 63.556-8]) as an example of this popular belief. *De Cura pro Mortuis Gerenda* 10.12 (BA 2.492). For discussion, see Appendix A of this thesis.

Mortuis Gerenda (circa 421 A.D.).⁷²

Augustine acknowledged both the phenomenon that people in their dreams can see the appearance of the dead, or learn things which they did not know from the dead, and the phenomenon that some prophetic or admonitory messages imparted by the dead in dreams can be true. However, he insisted that what the dreamers see are actually the images or resemblances of the dead, rather than the real souls or bodies of the dead. These phenomena happen never by the workings of the dead, but by the workings of angels through the images of the dead, with the command or permission of God. The dead themselves have nothing to do with these phenomena, and can never know that their appearances have been seen by the living in dreams. Hence, these phenomena can verify neither that the dead are able to relay messages to people, nor that they hold the capability of intruding into the lives of people.⁷³

Augustine provided a dream report, with which he was associated, as an example to clarify his argument. One day when Eulogius, Augustine's disciple and a rhetorician at Carthage, was reviewing a lecture on a rhetorical work of Cicero intended for delivery the following day, he came upon an obscure passage and could not determine its exact meaning. During the night, Augustine, while his body remained in Milan, appeared in Eulogius' dream, and expounded the passage to him. However, after returning from Milan to Carthage and hearing this dream reported by Eulogius, Augustine stressed that it was not him or his soul, but his image which was beheld by Eulogius in the dream, for he himself was far across the sea at that moment,

⁷² *De Cura* 10.12 (BA 2.492). On the other hand, some church fathers held this belief. For example, Potamiaena, after his death (martyrdom), appeared in the dreams of the living in order to exhort them, according to Eusebius. *Historia Ecclesiastic* 6.5.7 (SC 41.93). Gregory the Great also reckoned that a saintly man after his death could appear to his followers. *Dialogorum* 4.49 (SC 265.168-72).

⁷³ *De Cura* 10.12-13.16 (BA 2.490-506). Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2.60 (SC 132.424-6), in which Origen discussed the appearance of the dead to the living.

engaged in other matters and ignorant of Eulogius' concerns. He deserved no credit for helping Eulogius, as he was not involved in any part of the process.⁷⁴

Augustine pointed out that in dreams one sees the dead in the same way in which one sees the living. In both instances, the dead and the living are entirely ignorant of who dreams of them. In this respect, how can the dead or the living, unaware of another's situation, be engaged in another's life through dreams? The images of the dead or the living may emerge in one's dreams by whatever means, yet this never occurs by means of their own action. Obviously, it is their similitudes, rather than their real bodies or souls, appearing in one's dreams.⁷⁵

More importantly, the dead have no power to interfere in the affairs of the living because only the divine does. Even the saints or martyrs have no such power. They can do nothing without divine dispensation and assistance. God alone is able to utilise dreams as a medium, through the operation of angels, to intervene in human affairs and show His wonders and care for humanity.⁷⁶

Augustine believed that if the dead were able to participate in human affairs, then his devout mother would appear to him in dreams every night. Yet, neither could his dead mother learn of his suffering, nor could her soul offer him her assistance. This is because all the souls of the dead were deposited in the place "where they do not see the things which go on and transpire in this mortal life" and where they either "are suffering their own evil deserts, if they have such merits, or they rest in peace."⁷⁷

⁷⁴ *De Cura* 11.13 (BA 2.494-6).

⁷⁵ Ibid. 11.13-12.15 (BA 2.494-502).

⁷⁶ Ibid. 10.12; 13.16; 16.19-20 (BA 2.490-4; 2.502-6; 2.510-4).

⁷⁷ Ibid. 13.16 (BA 2.504-6; trans. R.J. Deferrari, *FC* 27.375). Dreams are also used by Augustine as an analogy or metonymy to describe the situation that the dead are located, according to their merits, either in a pleasant place or a frightful one (resembling that the dreamers enjoy pleasant dreams or are appalled by dreadful dreams). See his *In Euangelium Ioannis Tractatus* 49.9 (BA 73b.220-2).

For Augustine, a great chasm had been fixed between the dead and the living. Neither group could overstep the impassible boundary.⁷⁸ The dead reside in the place where they undergo what the living cannot experience, and also where the living cannot be, while the living dwell in the place where they are doing what the dead cannot be involved in, and also where the dead cannot appear.

Some dream reports may convince people of the possibility that the dead can enter into people's dreams. Nonetheless, the phenomenon of the dead appearing in people's dreams does not necessarily denote either that this happens by the power of the dead, or that the dead seen represent the real body or soul of the dead. In any case, the dead whom a dreamer sees in dreams are only likenesses or images which result from divine dispensation, or merely from the imagination of the dreamer.

Perceptibly, Augustine's investigation of dreams was not concerned with developing a dream theory, but with pursuing his doctrinal agenda. Dreams or dream accounts are theologised in his dream texts while the doctrine of man is explicitly amalgamated into his explanations of the phenomena of dreams. For example, Perpetua's dream was analysed not on the grounds of the context of Perpetua's dream diary (or dream narrative) but on that of Augustine's doctrinal concern, that is, whether man's soul is corporeal. Likewise, Eulogius' dream (in which Augustine appeared as a professional rhetorician) was interpreted in a way that highlights Augustine's doctrine of man (more precisely, the dead man), instead of his erudition, his authoritative teaching, or his remarkable and privileged role as a dream messenger.

Within Augustine's doctrinalised oneirology, dreams are the embodiment of the soul's invisible activity, and even of the incorporeal soul itself. Dreams prove the

⁷⁸ Cf. Luke 16:26.

incorporeity of man's soul as well as the incapability of the dead to play a part in human affairs. Dreams can turn into a venue for humanity to see their immaterial souls, but can never be a place where either the bodies of the dead or their souls can loom.

Conclusion

In contrast to their pagan counterparts, Christian writers have been rather deficient in constructing oneiric theory.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the four church fathers discussed above undertook the task of articulating the elucidation of dreams and their mechanics. Tertullian even developed a relatively integral theory of dreams. While most Greek and Roman dream theorists related dreams to human physical(sensory) or mental function and phenomena,⁸⁰ these church fathers always connected them to those of the human soul. Although these church fathers disagreed with each other on several points concerning the issue of dreams, they all concurred with the view of dreams as the products of the soul's movement.⁸¹

According to these church fathers, dreams originate within the human soul, rather than the mind, brain or unconsciousness. It is not merely after the body's death that the soul becomes active, working and autonomous. Rather, the soul already exposes its vitality, ability, activity and duty in this life, particularly as the body reposes during the night. One of its major commissions is that it exerts its own faculties to create and then publish its works— dreams, when the body sleeps. The soul is exempt from sleeping but never from dreaming, or more precisely, from

⁷⁹ This statement is true in the context of either early or contemporary Christianity.

⁸⁰ See Appendix A of this thesis.

⁸¹ This view was very likely first proposed by Tertullian among church fathers. Moreover, among the Christian writers of the patristic period, in addition to these four church fathers, the author of *Homiliae* in Clementine literature also clearly asserted that dreams are the products of the soul. (Pseudo-) Clement of Rome, *Homiliae* 9.15 (GCS 42.137-8).

creating dreams. The body rests but the soul dreams.

Hence, the mechanics and phenomena of dreams find their root in the soul's operation or activities. Dream images are composed or conceived of in a natural (for Gregory of Nyssa) or mysterious (for Augustine) way by the soul itself through its imagination or the memory of the dreamer. Every dream can be a masterpiece of the painstaking efforts of the soul. Dreams can aptly be termed as the soul's creations and even as its "creatures" since they are so vivid and mesmerising.

Additionally, these church fathers considered dreams not only as the visual (or even audio-visual) products of the soul, but also its "visible" movement. The soul is in motion, therefore dreams emerge. Sometimes, the dreamer sees what their soul acts. The content of dreams represents the kinetic trajectory of the soul's action or activities. Accordingly, the nature of human-inspired dreams can be understood as the creations of the soul's movement.

Furthermore, unlike Greek or Roman dream theorist, these church fathers' attempts to conceptualise the phenomena of dreams, or articulate the explanation of their mechanics, was transparently not to resolve the issues of dreams, but to disseminate or justify Christian doctrines, especially the doctrine of man. Almost without exception their discourses on the mechanics or phenomena of dreams appear in the treatises or in a context that aims to demonstrate and undergird the doctrine of man or Christian anthropology.

In the oneirology of these church fathers, the phenomena of sleeping and waking symbolise both man's death and the bodily resurrection of the dead at Parousia, while dreaming manifest the features and qualities of man's soul. The fact that dreams are so real as well as unreal signifies their nature as an ontologically ambiguous existence. Their nature parallels that of the soul. Fittingly, these church

fathers applied dreams and the soul to ontologically analogise and essentially characterise each other.

For some of these church fathers, dreams veraciously reflected the nature of their maker, the soul, as rational because they could be created only by the one that is able to contemplate the thing not actually present, or seen by, the bodily sense of sight. Yet, for another church father, dreams revealed the irrational character of their author since their content was often absurd or illogical, and thus could never be designed by the one that is proficient of reasoning. Therefore, they must be molded by the work of the irrational part of the soul.

For others, dreams mirrored the immortal essence of the soul, for they could be generated only by the one that was capable of continuous perpetual activity and dynamic locomotion throughout day and night, and could deliberate eternal things. For others still, dreams unmasked the incorporeal nature of the soul as they, or their images, could never be material and thus could be derived only from the one that is also insubstantial in nature.

Despite the discordant opinions of these church fathers regarding the soul's nature, dreams were unanimously appropriated by them to argue the metaphysical status of the soul. Eventually dreams became the crucial, "visible" evidence to support the existence, essence and power of the invisible soul. Dreaming, dreams and their phenomena existed, in addition to their daily functions, mainly for the service of illuminating the hidden truth about the doctrine of man. It was the making of the doctrine of man that marked not only the birth of dreams as the soul's ingenious creations which unveil the soul's possession of the likeness of God, the Creator and a Spirit without a corporeal body, but also the genesis of the soul as a dream-weaver or dream-maker who divulges the origin of the enigmatic dreams and their

connotations.

Noticeably, dreams and the doctrine of man are strongly correlated with each other in the methodology and hermeneutics of these church fathers. On the one hand, dreams were interpreted not for dreamers (e.g. Perpetua and Eulogius), but for the doctrine. The dialectics of dreams facilitated and also shaped their articulation of the doctrine. On the other hand, the doctrine determined the keynote of their dream theory or explanation. It even defined the nature of dreams and orientated their mission outside the dream world.

It seems, for these church fathers, that only through utilising the analogy of dreams and the deduction of their operation could the doctrine be demonstrated more completely. Only in the thread of the soul's movement by the approach of the doctrine could the mechanics of dreams be fully understood. Consequently, in their arguments they rendered dreams and their phenomena into doctrinal language while melting the doctrine into their interpretation of dreams.

Contextually, because their theory or explication of dreams teems with doctrinal language and apologetic expression, it could therefore be easily identified as Christian (or even as "orthodox") and accepted in the early Christian community. At the same time, because the doctrine was argued and propagandised by dreams which people all have and experience in their daily lives, it would be more apprehensible and relevant to its audience.

We may now discern the distinguishing trait of patristic oneirology in which dreams and the Christian doctrine are inseparably related to each other for both the purposes of propagational methodology and hermeneutical reciprocity. It is this trait that sharply differentiated patristic oneirology from Greco-Roman, biblical, Jewish or modern oneirology. Truly, the probe into patristic views of the nature of

human-inspired dreams can be thoroughly accomplished only by an approach that includes the exploration of the early Christian doctrine of man, and the same may apply in reverse.

Chapter 2

Dreams as Indicators and Their Relation to the Doctrine of Asceticism

Even the demons require such discipline from their dreamers as a gratification to their divinity because they know its power of making man intimate with God. — Tertullian, *De Anima* 48.4

As often happens, the constitution of dreams is framed with regard to such and such a condition of the body: for thus the thirsty man seems to be among springs,..., and the young man in the heat of youthful vigour is beset by fancies corresponding to his passion. — Gregory of Nyssa, *De Hominis Opificio* 13.14.

If during sleep the natural movements of the body occur without [dream] images, they reveal that the soul is healthy to a certain extent. The formation of images is a symptom of illness. — Evagrius, *Praktikos*, 62.

Some Greco-Roman physicians (e.g. Hippocrates and Galen) and philosophers (e.g. Cicero),¹ observed the correlation between human-inspired dreams² and the dreamer's somatic or mental condition. Yet, several church fathers, including Tertullian, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom and Evagrius Ponticus, went further

¹ Hippocrates, *Regimen* 4.88-93 (LCL 150.422-46); Galen, *De Dignotione ex Insomniis* (ed. K.G. Kühn, *Opera Omnia Claudii Galeni*, 832-5; trans. S.M. Oberhelman, in the appendix of "Galen, On Diagnosis from Dreams," 43-6); Cicero, *De Divinatione* 2.69.142 (LCL 154.528). For discussion, see Appendix A of this thesis.

² "Human-inspired dream(s)" hereafter in this chapter referred to as "dream(s)," unless specifically stated otherwise.

than their pagan counterparts, and correlated dreams with the dreamer's psychical (ψυχικός or 'soulish') condition. Hence, in the views of these four church fathers, one could diagnose the malady of one's holistic state by tracing one's own dreams, which could faithfully indicate the condition of one's body, mind and soul.

However, unlike the Greco-Roman physicians, these church fathers established the correlation between dreams and the dreamer's state in order to serve a doctrinal purpose, rather than a medical or oneirological one. Their discourses on the indicative function of dreams emerged almost entirely from within the context of instruction in the doctrine of asceticism. Dreams, due to their ability to reveal the infirmity of a man as a whole and betoken his spiritual alienation, were utilised by these church fathers in order to emphasise the necessity of abstinent discipline for every Christian, and thus to propagate their ascetical beliefs.

In terms of their methodology and hermeneutics, on the one hand, they ascetically doctrinalised dreams, giving them teleological meaning and shaping them fittingly into their teachings. Dreams were then doctrinally (re)presented. On the other hand, their ascetic doctrine by dreams penetrated into the daily life of every Christian. The doctrine was therefore oneirologically amplified.

In this chapter I argue that the nature of human-inspired dreams in the writings of these church fathers can be conceived of as indicators of the dreamer's physical, mental or psychical state. I also demonstrate the methodological and hermeneutical relationships between dreams and the doctrine of asceticism in their texts.

1. Tertullian

Tertullian assented to the idea that the condition of man's soul or mind could

affect his dreams or dreaming, and accordingly his dreams could mirror that condition. Some pagan dream theorists (e.g. Aristotle)³ assumed that infants do not dream because their souls (the creators of dreams) still remain undeveloped, and therefore cannot fully function like those of adults. Tertullian, however, hotly disputed this assumption. For him, everyone who had a soul, regardless of its maturity, must dream. If some people never dream, then there must be something wrong “in the constitution of their soul.”⁴

In his *De Anima*, Tertullian considered the tremors, nods and bright smiles of infants in sleep not only as evidence that their souls were dreaming but also as evidence of “the emotions of their souls” which were “generated by dreams and which so readily escape to the surface through the delicate tenderness of their infantine body.”⁵ A man’s dreams thus could witness the existence, capability and sentiment of his soul. Since dreams correctly represented the soul’s oscillations of mood,⁶ they could be reckoned as the emotional index of the soul.

Moreover, Tertullian proclaimed, “The fact that we remember dreams is proof of the fundamental soundness of the mind.”⁷ Here, apparently it was our memory of dreams, rather than the real content of our dreams, that reflected the soundness of our mind. Nevertheless, our dreams (or their content) undeniably still played a part in our drawing inference about the fitness of our mind. That is, if our memory was the proof, then our dreams must be the sign, indicating the degree or level of the soundness of our mind. In other words, if the content of a man’s dreams are clearer or more

³ Aristotle, *De Insomniis* 461a12 (ed. D. Gallop, 96) and *Historiae Animalium* 4.10 (537b.15-21. LCL 438.88).

⁴ *De Anima* 49.1-2 (ed. J.H. Waszink, 67). Cf. Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* 10.98.211 (ed. and trans. H. Rackham, LCL 353.426), asserting that, “An infant begins to dream at once, for it wakes up in a fright, and also imitates sucking.”

⁵ *De Anima* 49.1 (ed. Waszink, 67; trans. P. Holmes, ANF 3.227).

⁶ Cf. Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 1.1 (ed. R.A. Pack, 3-4).

⁷ *De Anima* 45.6 (ed. Waszink, 62; trans. E.A. Quain, FC 10.281).

comprehensible in his memory, then this may denote a sounder mind.

The case of Nero was exploited as an example of how a man's psychical or mental state affected his dreams. Tertullian credited and recounted Suetonius' report that "Nero never had dreams unless, perhaps, near the end of his life after some great fright."⁸ According to Tertullian's theory, the fact that Nero had not dreamed for a long time signified either the abnormality of his soul (for it could not produce dreams) or the insanity of his mind (for it could not remember dreams).⁹ Clearly, in Tertullian's oneirology, there was a correlation between dreams and the dreamer's soul and mind. The latter dominated the production or recollection of the former; therefore, the former could indicate the state of the latter.

Furthermore, in Tertullian's text, we notice the connection between dreams as indicators and the doctrine of asceticism. Dreams and their related practice were discussed not for an oneirological enterprise but for a doctrinal construction. Tertullian refuted both the idea that people can control their dreams by eating or restricting the intake of certain foods, and the belief that fasting could procure "incubation-oracles (*oracula incubaturis*)."¹⁰ Seemingly, for Tertullian, dietetic

⁸ Ibid. 44.2 (ed. Waszink, 61; trans. Quain, 279). See Suetonius, *Nero* 46 (*LCL* 38.170) in which Suetonius narrated that Nero "had never before been in the habit of dreaming, after he had killed his mother. . . ." Besides, in the same chapter, Tertullian also specified that the phenomena of the ancient Greek philosopher Hermotimus of Clazomenae having always suffered some kind of heavy sleep (in which he was killed by his enemies) must be caused by an incubus or some special disease or malady.

⁹ Later, Tertullian mentioned that Nero's abnormality was caused by the demons. *De Anima* 49.2 (ed. Waszink, 67).

¹⁰ Ibid. 48.1-3 (ed. Waszink, 66). Here, Tertullian was also suspicious of the popular idea that dreams could be affected by the time when dreams occur (such as near or far from morning) or by the season (e.g. dreams in spring are tranquil, whereas those in winter and autumn become agitated). He traced the source of this idea to Plato (*Timaeus* 70-72 [*LCL* 234.184-90]); Cf. Galen's treatise, *De Dignotione ex Insomniis* (ed. Kühn, *Opera Omnia Claudii Galeni*, 832-5; trans. Oberhelman, in the appendix of "Galen, On Diagnosis from Dreams," 43-6). Waszink aptly remarks that for Tertullian, "it is impossible that dreams are influenced from without." Waszink, *Tertulliani*, 506-7. Therefore, Le Goff, in his analysis of Tertullian's *De Anima* chapter 48, was wrong (probably due to misreading the text) to assume that Tertullian agreed with this popular idea and also the idea that dreams "depend on the position of the sleeper's body, his diet and his degree of sobriety." Le Goff, *L'imaginaire Médiéval*, 289.

abstinence had nothing to do with dreams. Nonetheless, he maintained that the practice of abstemiousness with the right motive could have a positive effect on dreams.¹¹

For example, Tertullian denounced the Pythagorean instruction regarding the proscribing of beans for an oneiric purpose as superstition.¹² Yet, he continued, “I do not mean to imply that in these matters this abstemiousness, which is required by pagan superstition, is of no importance for the true faith.” He believed that Daniel ate only vegetables and thus “as a reward received from God not only the gift of wisdom but a special power of experiencing dreams and of explaining their meaning.” However, he emphasised the point that Daniel’s reward had its roots in the fact that he practiced abstention in order not to be contaminated by royal food, rather than in order to experience profound dreams.¹³

Through this interpretation of Daniel’s dream narrative, Tertullian warned that the purpose of ascetic practice was to win God’s favour, rather than to augment the acquisition of beneficent dreams. Even “the demons require such discipline from their dreamers as a gratification to their divinity, because they know its power of making man intimate with God (*daemonia expostulant eam a suis somniatoribus ad lenocinium scilicet divinitatis, quia familiarem dei norunt*).”¹⁴ Hence, Christians must understand that such practice should aim simply to please the divine. Neither

¹¹ Likewise, Tertullian remarked that sobriety may have nothing to do with dreams, but did have “the effect of recommending the ecstasy to God so that it might take place in Him.” *De Anima* 48.3-4 (ed. Waszink, 66-7; trans. Quain, 287).

¹² This instruction can be found in *Protrepticus* 21 (ed. Édouard des Places, 131-51) written by the Pythagorean philosopher Iamblichus. Cicero disdained this instruction as absurd. *De Divinatione* 2.58.119 (*LCL* 154.504). Also cf. Aristotle, *De Insomniis* 461a8-24 (ed. Gallop, 96-8) and Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 3.3 (*GCS* 15.200-7). For discussion, see Waszink, *Tertulliani*, 511-2.

¹³ *De Anima* 48.3-4 (ed. Waszink, 66-7; trans. Waszink, [*Tertulliani*] 506 and Quain, 287). Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.9.78 (*SC* 108.156; trans. S.P. Wood, *FC* 23.160), in which Clement, while forbidding Christians from using expensive bedding, interpreted Jacob’s dream (Gen 28:11) as such that when Jacob slept on the ground with a stone for his pillow; “it was then that he was accounted worthy of beholding a dream beyond the power of man.”

¹⁴ *De Anima* 48.4 (ed. Waszink, 66; trans. Holmes, 226).

should they barter their ascetic observance for dreams; nor should they abstain from certain kinds of food for the same end. For Tertullian, abstinent or austere discipline assuredly benefits Christians and may sometimes result in the reception of special dreams from God (e.g. Daniel's case). But without a correct intention and disposition, their ascetic chastisement could be unavailing and may even be involved in the pagan superstitious practice of incubation.

Explicitly, dreams were premeditatedly associated with the doctrine of asceticism in Tertullian's writings. He first interpreted dreams (e.g. Nero's dream) so as to develop his theory concerning the correlation between dreams and the dreamer's state. Then he elucidated the doctrine on the ground of this correlation in order to illuminate the difference between ascetic practice of Christians and pagans. Dreams were hermeneutically at the service of his dogmatic or apologetic task. Consequently, even the demons and their dreamers were appropriated for explicating and promoting the truth about the doctrine.

2. Gregory of Nyssa

While Tertullian recognised that dreams could manifest the state of the dreamer's soul and mind, Gregory of Nyssa discerned that they could also disclose that of the body. In Gregory's *De Hominis Opificio*, dreams were strongly correlated with the condition of the whole person. Firstly, concerning the physical state, Gregory asserted that "the constitution of dreams is framed with regard to such and such a condition of the body (τοῦ σώματος διαθέσεις ἢ τῶν ἐνυπνίων κατὰ στασις ἀνατυποῦται)." This is why, as often happens, "the thirsty man seems to be among springs, the man who is in need of food to be at a feast, and the young man in the

heat of youthful vigour is beset by fancies corresponding to his passion.”¹⁵

Gregory suggested that a doctor could diagnose his patients according to their dreams, as certain patients had certain kinds of dreams. For example, the dreams “of those of weak stomach are of one kind, those of persons suffering from injury to the cerebral membrane of another, those of persons in fevers of yet another.” Since a patient’s dreams were brought into likeness by the particular state of his body, they could exhibit the particular symptom of his illness.¹⁶

Secondly, dreams could represent the mental state of the dreamer, whether they were fit or sick. In the case of the dreamer being healthy, their dreams, which often appeared absurd, could confirm that their mind (with its intellectual faculties) was at rest in sleep; thus the dreamer’s resting mind had very little influence on their dreams.¹⁷ In the case of an ill person, however, their mental state could have a greater impact on both their dreams and their judgment about dreams. By way of example, Gregory reported a case concerning a relative.

When Gregory’s relative was sick, he kept crying out and finding fault with those who wanted to drench him with water and fill his intestines with dung. Later, he himself and everyone around him understood why he had complained, after a copious sweat broke out over his body, and a relaxation of the bowels explained the weight in his intestines. While seeing this, Gregory realised that what his relative fancied (and complained about) were actually what he saw in his dreams. As his

¹⁵ *De Hominis Opificio* 13.14 (ed. G.H. Forbes, 184-6; trans. Moore, *NPNF* 5.402). Cf. Isa 29.8; Jerome, *Apologia contra Rufinum* 1.31 (*SC* 303.86-90) and *Dialogus Adversus Luciferianos* 8 (*PL* 23.163-4).

¹⁶ *De Hominis Opificio* 13.16 (ed. Forbes, 186; trans. Moore, 402). Cf. the same idea proposed by the Greek physicians Hippocrates, Rufus of Ephesus and Galen. For discussion, see Appendix A of this thesis. Also, Gregory the Great mentioned that “dreams are generated either by a full stomach or an empty one.” *Dialogorum* 4.50 (*SC* 265.172; trans. O.J. Zimmerman, *FC* 39.261) and *Moralia in Job* 8.24.42 (*CCL* 143.413-4).

¹⁷ *De Hominis Opificio* 13.5-7 (ed. Forbes, 178-80). In Gregory’s view, dreams which appear absurd are actually normal.

intelligent and sober judgment was dulled by disease, not only were his dreams full of fanciful images, he was unable to differentiate between reality and dreaming. As a result, he mistook the content of dreams to be that which was happening to him in reality. Gregory then ascertained that the cause of both his dreams and his aberrant judgment emanated from the ill state of his body and mind.¹⁸

Finally, in Gregory's thought, dreams could also express the condition of a dreamer's soul.¹⁹ In his theory, the soul consisted of the rational part and the irrational one. When the body slept, the soul's rational part also slumbered, and its irrational part took over the soul's functions, including the operation of dreaming and the production of dreams. Dreams originated with "the irrational part of the soul (τῷ ἀλογωτέρῳ τῆς ψυχῆς)" and thus were often preposterous and nonsensical. If they were produced by the work of the soul's rational part, they would be more reasonable and logical.²⁰ Hence, dreams could attest to the fact that one part of the soul was resting in sleep and the other working. They witnessed the half-dreaming and half-waking state of the soul.

Moreover, like Tertullian, Gregory closely related dreams as a signifier to the doctrine of asceticism. In a chapter previous to his discourse on dreams, Gregory characterised three types of man in accordance with their inner disposition: the carnal man who busies himself with the belly and fleshly pleasure and is "incapable of receiving the more perfect doctrine," the natural man who holds "a middle position

¹⁸ Ibid. 13.15 (ed. Forbes, 186).

¹⁹ Gregory's dream of holding the relics of martyrs which glow brilliantly can be an example of how dreams reflect the state of the dreamer's soul. In this case, the dream expresses the soul's sorrow. Gregory related that after awakening from the dream, "I could not clearly understand the riddle of the dream, but I sensed some grief with my soul..." On the next day, while seeing his dying sister, Gregory realised that those relics he saw in the dream symbolised the remains of his sister who was a holy martyr in Gregory's view. Gregory, *Vita Sanctae Macrinae* 15 (PG 46:976; ed. V.W. Callahan, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, 8/1.387; trans. Callanhan, FC 58.174).

²⁰ *De Hominis Opificio* 13.5-7 (ed. Forbes, 178-80).

with regard to vice and virtue, rising above the one but without pure participation in the other,” and finally the spiritual man who perceives and fervently pursues “the perfection of godly life.”²¹

Immediately following his discussion of the correlation between dreams and the dreamer’s state, Gregory exhorted his readers to practice abstemiousness. He said that those of a slavish disposition bring their reason into bondage to the impulses of their nature and pay servile homage to the pleasures of sense and the desire for food. Yet in the case of more perfect men, their mind “takes the lead, and chooses the expedient course by reason and not by passion,” while their nature follows in the tracks of its leader, rather than its desire. He then remarked, “Let this teach carnal men not to bind their intellect closely to the phenomena of sense, but rather to busy themselves with their spiritual advantages, as the true soul is found in these.”²²

Dreams could expose which type of man the dreamer appertains to, as “most men’s dreams are conformed to the state of their character.” Correspondingly, “the wanton man’s dreams of one kind, the continent man’s of another; the liberal man and the avaricious man are subject to different fancies.”²³ Dreams therefore enabled the dreamer to perceive the status quo of his spiritual life, and encouraged him to seek a more devoted life. Here, through his dream discourse, Gregory urged Christians to refrain from fleshly pleasure and aspire to be spiritual men.

It seems that for Gregory, man’s personality, temperament and spiritual disposition were all involved in forming his dreams during the night, just as they shaped his demeanor during the daytime. In his dreams, as in his daily life, a carnal

²¹ Ibid. 8.6 (ed. G.H. Forbes, 144; trans. Moore, 394). Cf. 1 Cor 2:14-4; 3.3.

²² *De Hominis Opificio* 14.1; 15.2 (ed. Forbes, 188; 192; trans. Moore, 403). Cf. *De Virginitate*, Intro (PG 46:317; SC 119.248; trans. Moore, NPNF 5.343) in which Gregory noted, “In the devotee bodily desire has become weak; and so there will follow an inquiry as to the true object of desire, for which (and which only) we have received from our Maker our power of desiring.”

²³ *De Hominis Opificio* 13.17 (ed. Forbes, 188; trans. Moore, 402).

or natural man indulged in sensual pleasure. Conversely, a spiritual man yearned for purity and virtue when both awake and dreaming. By reviewing his dreams he could assess his spiritual state for the growth and improvement of his life. Hence, dreams could inspire Christians to practice abstinence, so as to become the one who owns a holy life and pleases God.

Furthermore, in his hagiographical writing *Vita Sanctae Macrinae* (written in Asia Minor around 380 A.D.), Gregory, through a report of his own dream, ardently promulgated the ascetic life.²⁴ In this dream text, Gregory depicted his sister Macrina—a virgin, the head of a monastery at Annesi (in Pontus)²⁵ and a holy martyr in Gregory’s view—as an exemplary ascetic, and described her austere discipline in detail.²⁶ It is also to Macrina, as Virginia Callahan remarks, “that Gregory gives credit for Basil’s conversion from the worldly life of the rhetorician to the asceticism of the priesthood, and he leaves no doubt of the influence that she had upon his own life.”²⁷

In addition, by relating the dream of his mother, Emmelia, Gregory recounted a phenomenal event which occurred at the birth of Macrina, and which was associated with Thecla, the converted follower of Paul²⁸ and a patron saint of the

²⁴ Similarly, Gregory of Nazianzus also by reporting his own dream greatly promoted ascetic virtues. Gregory of Nazianzus, *De Animae Suae Calamitatibus Carment Lugubre*, 2.1.45.229-66 (PG 37. 1369-72). For an English translation of this dream account, see Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 247-8.

²⁵ Stephen Davis, *The Cult of St Thecla* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 63. Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 104.

²⁶ *Vita Sanctae Macrinae*, particularly 15.1-21.20 (PG 46:976-981; ed. Callahan, 8/1.387-394).

²⁷ Ibid. 6.1-18 (PG 46:965B-D); Virginia Callahan, “Introduction to the Life of Saint Macrina,” in *FC* 58, p161. However, interesting enough, Basil himself never mentions his sister Macrina by name in his writings. He attributed his devotion to ascetic life to the influence of Eustathius the Philosopher, who is never mentioned by Gregory. Basil, *Epistula*, 2 and 233 (ed. Y. Courtonne, [Tome I] 5-13 and [Tome III] 39-41); Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 82, 135; Pierre Maraval, *Vie de Sainte Macrine* (SC 178), 162 note 4.

²⁸ For Thecla’s conversion, ministry and life, see *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (later collected or edited into *Acts of Paul*). There was also a dream associated with Thecla. *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 28 reports a dream of the Queen Tryphaena (a kinswoman of the Caesar) in which her daughter told her to adopt Thecla.

ascetic life in Asia Minor and Egypt.²⁹ When the due time came in which Emmelia was to be freed from her pangs through the delivery of Macrina, she fell asleep. In her dream, she was carrying in her hands the child which was still in her womb. Someone “in form and raiment more splendid than a human being appeared and addressed the child she was carrying by the name of Thecla, that Thecla, I mean, who is so famous among the virgins.” This then became the secret name of Macrina.³⁰

At the end of this dream account, Gregory concluded that the one who appeared in the dream “was not so much indicating how the child should be named, but foretelling the child’s life and intimating that she would follow her namesake’s mode of life.”³¹ Obviously, while her mother’s dream only gave Macrina a name (in fact, Thecla was a very common name in the early Christian community)³² Gregory, by interpreting it, gave an ascetic meaning to that name and a predictive nature to that dream, and thus asceticised the life of Macrina from the very beginning, even when she remained unborn.

Despite his somewhat suspicious or negative attitude towards dreams,³³ Gregory recorded and highlighted two dream accounts (which have the descriptions of the content of dreams), one for his mother’s dream and the other for his own. Both dreams concerned an ascetic exemplar, the former dream revealing the divine

²⁹ Davis, *The Cult of St Thecla*, 54-9, 102-3, 191-4; Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 237. Thecla was strongly endorsed by Athanasius in his *On Virginity* (SPAW 33.1026-34) as a patron saint, especially for ascetic women. For discussion, see Davis, *The Cult of St Thecla*, 86-94. Gregory of Nyssa also complimented her on her ascetic virtues. He commended that Thecla undertook the ascetic sacrifice, practicing great austerities, extinguishing in herself all mundane affections and subsiding her passions by a life dead to the senses. Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum*, *Homily* 14 (PG 44:1068A-B).

³⁰ *Vita Sanctae Macrinae*, 2.21-31 (PG 46:961A-B; trans. L. Clarke, 20-1).

³¹ Ibid. 2.31-34 (PG 46:961B-C).

³² David Scholer, “Thecla,” in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. by Everett Ferguson (London: Routledge, 2nd edition, 1999), 1113.

³³ *De Hominis Opificio* 13.5-11 (ed. Forbes, 178-84).

providence of Macrina's ascetic life and the later extolling her ascetic virtues.

Purposely, both dream accounts, with their interpretations, ascetically inspired Christians.

According to Gregory, dreams could reflect the somatic, mental and psychical state of the dreamer. They could be viewed as the indicator of the whole man. The correlation between dreams and the dreamer's condition in Gregory's oneiric theory is broader and stronger than that in any other patristic dream theorist's. In early Christianity, therefore, Gregory was the most eminent writer in respect of his substantial contribution to the medical technique of diagnosing man's condition through dreams.³⁴ This technique was very likely applied among Christian doctors, as Gregory stated that his view also "is taken by those skilled in medicine."³⁵ In this regard, he seems to be the adherent of Hippocrates, Galen or Cicero.

However, what distinguishes Gregory the most from those pagan writers is the fact that his articulation and use of this technique was intended not for medical purposes, but for doctrinal ones, especially for the propagation of the doctrine of asceticism. We notice that Gregory doctrinalised dreams in order to publicise his ascetic teaching. Dreams and doctrine were elaborately intertwined to that end. In Gregory's dream theory, dreams could impart the dreamer's spiritual state. They essentially functioned as a ruler for measuring the spirituality of the dreamer's life and thus as a call for him to observe ascetic discipline. Likewise, either Gregory's dream discourse, or his interpretation of dreams (e.g. his mother's dream and his own

³⁴ It is surprising that although Gregory made such a profound contribution (particularly by articulating this medical technique) to patristic oneirology, many modern scholars who work on this subject either ignore him entirely (e.g. Jacques Le Goff) or scarcely discuss his theory and use of this technique (e.g. Patricia Miller and Morton Kelsey). Le Goff, *L'imaginaire Médiéval*, 265-316; Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 47-51; Kelsey, *God, Dreams, and Revelation*, 124.

³⁵ *De Hominis Opificio* 13.16 (ed. Forbes, 186; trans. Moore, 402). Gregory's statement at least signifies that this technique was popular in his time.

dream), were totally asceticised.

3. John Chrysostom

The monk-bishop and famous “golden-mouth” homilist John Chrysostom spoke of dreams probably more frequently than any other church father.³⁶ He contended that dreams could bare the dreamer’s soul, particularly its thoughts and desires. Firstly, he pointed out, “At night, it is natural that the soul to see in her dreams all the things that she thinks about in the day.”³⁷ Dreams reproduced the thoughts and concerns of the dreamer’s soul. It was one’s daily preoccupations which determined the content of one’s dreams.

Secondly, Chrysostom held that dreams could also stem from the desires of the dreamer’s soul. “For it is the nature of the soul for the most part to raise dreams of such things [unlawful things], as it wishes for and desires in the daytime.”³⁸ In *Ad Theodorum Lapsam*, Chrysostom wrote that when those who work in the mines or

³⁶ According to Jeffrey Pettis, Chrysostom’s works (mostly homilies) have the highest frequency of dream references (220 references to dreams), nearly twice that of Augustine (89). Jeffrey Pettis, *The Sleeper’s Dream: Asclepius Ritual and Early Christian Discourse* (Dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 2004), 12, footnote 29. However, the word “dream(s) (ὄνειρος)” was used by Chrysostom mostly as a (negative) metaphor to describe mundane affairs and the present life. For examples, see his *Baptismal Catecheses* 7.15, 7.19, 8.11 (SC 50.236, 238, 253-4); *De Penitentia* Homily 4.2.10 (PG 49.302); *Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Corinthios* 14.4 (PG 61.119; NPNF 12 column 14.7); *Homiliae in Epistulam II ad Corinthios* 23.5 (PG 61.560-2; NPNF 12 column 23.7); *Homiliae in Epistolam ad Hebraeos* 9.5 (PG 63.82; NPNF 14 column 9.10); *Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Timotheum* 15.3 (PG 62.584); *Homiliae in Epistolam ad Titum* 2.4 (PG 62.676); *Homiliae in Genesim* 7.7, 8.6, 23.2, 28.3, 35.7-8, 50.2, 60.3 (PG 53.69 [FC 74 column 7.20], 53.75 [FC 74 column 8.18.], 53.198-9 [FC 82 column 23.5], 53.256 [FC 82 column 28.10], 53.331 [FC 82 column 35.22], 53.450 [FC 87 column 50.10], 53.523 [FC 87 column 60.14]); *Homiliae in Iohannem* 5.4, 42.3, 71.2, 76.1, 87.3 (PG 59.59, 59.346, 59.386-7, 59.409, 59.476); *Homiliae in Matthaum* 10.5 (PG 57.190; NPNF 10 column 10.6). Therefore, although the word “dream(s)” may appear in Chrysostom’s writings much more than in those of Tertullian or Augustine, the contribution of Chrysostom to patristic oneirology (particularly to patristic construction of dream theory) was actually much less than that of either Tertullian or Augustine.

³⁷ *De Penitentia*, Homily 1.1 (PG 49.277; trans. G.G. Christo, FC 96.2 [column 1.4]). Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, *De Rebus Suis*, 2.1.1.290-1 (PG 37.991-2); Gregory of Nyssa, *De Hominis Opificio* 13.5-17 (ed. Forbes, 178-88).

³⁸ *Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Thessalonicenses* 5.4 (PG 62.428; trans. J. Broadus, NPNF 13.347). Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 4.18.114-7 (SC 463.244-50).

suffer some other kind of punishment have fallen asleep, owing to their many weary toils and the extreme bitterness of their life, they “in their dreams see themselves living in luxury and prosperity.”³⁹ In other words, dreams could compensate dreamers for their adversity or affliction and also satisfy their cravings. Therefore, they could faithfully reflect what the dreamer’s soul contemplates or yearns for at the present time.

Furthermore, the capacity of dreams to manifest the state of the dreamer’s soul was pertained to the doctrine of asceticism in Chrysostom’s homilies. For example, through dream discussions Chrysostom harshly criticised people who indulged in worldly pleasure and extolled the ascetic life. In one of his sermons on *First Corinthians*, he portrayed voluptuaries as wild beasts and irrational creatures, rather than human beings. They lived for their belly and could scarcely do anything other than indulge. In their sleep, they saw only “strange dreams and full of all manner of fancies.”⁴⁰

At the end of this sermon, and following his condemnation of the voluptuaries, Chrysostom encouraged his audience to practice asceticism. He concluded, “let us flee from the evil banquets of luxury and cleave to a spare table; that being of a good habit both of soul and body, we may both practice all virtue, and attain the good things to come.”⁴¹ Hence, Christians must abstain from carnal enjoyment in order to maintain the firmness of the soul and body as well as to avoid

³⁹ *Ad Theodorum Lapsum*, Letter 1.9 (SC 117.126; trans. NPNF 9.98). Cf. Jerome, *Apologia contra Rufinum* 1.31 (SC 303.86-90).

⁴⁰ *Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Corinthios* 39.9 (PG 61.346; trans. NPNF 12.243 [column 39.18]). In another sermon, Chrysostom said that when voluptuaries go to sleep, their bad conscience will shape for them “dreams that abound with sundry terrors and in this way horrify them.” *Homiliae in Epistolam ad Romanos* 12.7 (PG 60.504; trans. W.H. Morris, NPNF 11.424 [column 12.v.13]). Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.9.80-1 (SC 108.158-62); Basil, *Epistula* 22.3 (ed. Y. Courtonne, [Tome I] 55-7).

⁴¹ *Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Corinthios* 39.9 (PG 61.348; trans. NPNF 12.243 [column 39.18]).

having unlawful or illusory dreams.

In another sermon on the same biblical book, Chrysostom reproached those who pursued mundane things. During the day time, they delighted in material pleasure and the abundance of wealth. During the night, they dreamt of being rich, and enjoyed a fantastic dissipation. However, eventually they would realise that all their pursuits end in vanity, as dreamers obtained nothing from their dreams, but “their punishment ensuing on their pleasure turns out no more a dream, but is matter of actual experience.”⁴²

Correspondingly, at the end of this sermon Chrysostom concluded, “In order therefore that we may be delivered both from dreams and from the evils that are not in dreams, instead of covetousness let us choose almsgiving, instead of rapine, mercy to people. For thus we shall obtain the good things both present and to come.”⁴³ For Chrysostom, dreams, like evils, could be destructive and spiritually lethal to Christians. When Christians submitted to ascetic discipline and virtue, even their dreams could be redeemed.

On the other hand, Chrysostom delineated the hermits in monasteries as heavenly men.⁴⁴ He believed that the hermits were free from all impurity. In their sleep, “no one among them is found snoring or breathing hard, or tossing about, or with his body exposed; but they lie in sleep as decently as those who are awake.”

⁴² Ibid. 36.6 (PG 61.316; trans. NPNF 12.222 [column 36.10]). In his preaching, Chrysostom frequently censured the rich and enjoined them to practice asceticism and almsgiving. For him, “riches and the desire of wealth is a drunkenness of the soul, and so carnal lust.” Both of them make Christians unable to keep sobriety but lure them into all vices. *Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Thessalonicenses* 9.3 (PG 62.450; trans. NPNF 13.362 [column 9.v.6.7.8]). Ramsay MacMullen has observed that Chrysostom’s audience consisted mainly of those who were from the uppermost ranks of society. Ramsay MacMullen, “The Preacher’s Audience (AD 350-400),” *JTS* 40, No.2 (1989), 504-5.

⁴³ *Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Corinthios* 36.6 (PG 61.316; trans. NPNF 12.222 [column 36.10]).

⁴⁴ Chrysostom himself had lived the rigorous monastic life for six years (c.372-8 A.D.) as a hermit before being a preacher. J.N.D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom* (London: Duckworth, 1995), 30-5.

Besides, they never dreamt of “wild fancies and monstrous visions.” All this was “the effect of the orderly state of their souls.” Chrysostom proclaimed, “These are truly saints and angels among men.”⁴⁵ For Chrysostom, ascetic hermits differed markedly from others, not only in waking life but in sleeping and dreaming. Even their sleep postures or their dreams testified to their angelic-like personality and identity.

Similarly, after his exaltation of the anchorites, Chrysostom urged his congregation to imitate their ascetic life. He advised that Christians should not occupy themselves with dining, laughing, sporting or bursting with gluttony, but with fasting, prayer, psalms and hymns. They should only partake of bread and salt. They must rest on a bed made for repose only and not for luxury. They had to emancipate themselves from all bonds, including those of fancies in dreams.⁴⁶

In Chrysostom’s opinion, vicious things or indulgence would corrupt people’s souls and thwart them from continuing chaste or having pure dreams.⁴⁷ But ascetic practice could assist them not only in restraining the flame of lust and overcoming pleasure, but also in restoring their souls and purifying their dreams.⁴⁸ It could even avail the ascetic against dreaming. Chrysostom, like Clement of Alexandria who taught that Christians “should sleep half-awake,”⁴⁹ asserted that “it is possible to sleep while awake” and be sober.⁵⁰ Hence, the ascetic may fall into sleep at night but

⁴⁵ *Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Timotheum*. 14.4 (PG 62.575-6; trans. NPNF 13.456).

⁴⁶ Ibid. 14.4 (PG 62.575-6). For the same purpose of having a sound sleep and pure dreams, Clement of Alexandria advised that Christians should eat only light food and a wineless meal. *Paedagogus* 2.9.80 (SC 108.158-60). On the other hand, Eusebius seemed to propose an anti-ascetical view. *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.3 (SC 41.26-7).

⁴⁷ *Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Thessalonicenses* 5.4 (PG 62.428; trans. Broadus, NPNF 13.347).

⁴⁸ For example, Chrysostom taught his congregation that “fasting is nourishment for the soul.” It invigorates the soul and renders the soul “superior to the pleasures and attractions of the present life. *Homiliae in Genesim* 1.4 (PG 53.25; trans. R.C. Hill, FC 74.26 [column 1.9]).

⁴⁹ Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.9.79 (SC 108.158).

⁵⁰ *Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Thessalonicenses* 9.3 (PG 62.450; trans. NPNF 13.362 [column 9.v.6.7.8]). Cf. 1 Thess 5:5–8. According to Palladius, when Chrysostom retired to a cave in the mountain as an anchorite, he denied himself sleep for the entire two years, never lying down by night or day. Palladius, *Dialogus* 5 (SC 341.110).

their spiritual sobriety and watchfulness could free them from the temptation of dream images or even from dreaming.

It was Chrysostom's belief that dreams were functionally the indicator of the state of the dreamer's soul, conveying what it was longing for during the daytime. Nevertheless, as a devoted preacher, Chrysostom was less enthusiastic about offering an elucidation of the function of dreams, or formulating a dream theory, than he was about promoting Christian faith or doctrines. Dreams were exerted by him mainly to disseminate the doctrine of asceticism. The function of dreams as indicators was mentioned always in the context of his ascetic instructions.

For Chrysostom, dreams varied from people to people. A man's dreams (and even his sleep postures) could demonstrate his true identity as the one belonging to this world or the heavenly one. More importantly, the practice of asceticism could cleanse his soul and refine his dreams, so he could be liberated from carnal pleasure during the day and also keep chaste in dreaming.

4. Evagrius Ponticus

Evagrius Ponticus was a disciple of Gregory of Nazianzus and a respected spiritual master in monastic communities. His writings were greatly indebted to Origen and had been widely read in both the East and the West, according to Palladius and Jerome. He also deliberately constructed the correlation between dreams and the condition of the dreamer's soul.⁵¹ In Evagrius' oneirological scheme, people's dreams could notify them of at least three kinds of states of their soul.

⁵¹ Evagrius, *Praktikos* epilogue (SC 171.482-94); Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 38.10 (PTS 51.625-6 [column 38.12-4]); Jerome, *Epistula* 133.3 (CSEL 56/1.244-7); Also see Robert Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus: the Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), vii; Antoine Guillaumont, *Évagre Le Pontique: Traité Pratique* (SC 171), 714-5.

Firstly, he declared, “If during sleep the natural movements of the body occur without [dream] images, they reveal that the soul is healthy to a certain extent. The formation of images is a symptom of illness (Αἱ αἰδέωλοι ἐν τοῖς ὕπνοις τοῦ σώματος φυσικὰ κινήσεις ὑγιαίνειν ποσῶς μηνύουσι τὴν ψυχὴν. πῆξις δὲ εἰδώλων ἀρρωστίας γνώρισμα).”⁵² Namely, whether a man’s soul was sound or not could be ascertained by whether or not he dreamt in sleep.

All other church fathers discussed in this chapter discerned the state of one’s soul according to the content of one’s dreams. Evagrius, however, went even further. He presupposed that the healthy soul neither conceived nor perceived dreams. Any kind of dream, even a peaceful or delightful one, signaled that the soul was unhealthy. In his oneirology, dreams themselves, not merely their content, become a criterion for diagnosing the soul.

Secondly, if the dreamer saw “vague images,” this signified “an old passion.” Thirdly, and conversely, if the dream images were “distinct,” this was “a sign of a current wound.”⁵³ While dreams indicated the ill condition of the soul, their visibility displayed the symptoms of that condition. Poor visibility dreams concerned the lust of the soul, and high visibility ones its trauma. Both Evagrius’ oneirocritic method and his diagnostic mode, in which the visibility of a dream determined its interpretation and the state of the dreamer’s soul respectively, were original and novel in patristic dream tradition.

However, why and how could visibility mirror the state of the soul? Why did indistinct dreams refer to the soul in mental terms and definite ones in physical terms?

⁵² *Praktikos* 55 (SC 171.628; trans. Sinkewicz, 107). Cf. John Cassian, *Collationes* 12.7.6-12.8.6 (SC 54.132-35).

⁵³ *Praktikos* 55 (SC 171.628; trans. Sinkewicz, 107). Cf. John Cassian, *De Institutis* 6.10 (SC 109.274).

What kind of dreams represented which type of desire or wound of the soul?

Evagrius did not provide any explanation or hint concerning these or other related questions. Probably he felt it unnecessary to explain, since dreams were simply abnormal or even unnatural phenomena. Despite his lack of explication, we can be in no doubt that what really mattered to Evagrius was not the content of dreams but their visibility.

Like Tertullian and Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius believed that dreams could tell the state of the dreamer's soul. However, unlike them, he viewed dreams virtually as ill-omened and pathological. Dreams may be categorised as vague or distinct, but either one merely denoted the soul's disorder. Evagrius' interpretation of and attitude towards dreams appears to have been an extremely negative.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, in his theology, dreams were neither futile nor baneful to Christian faith. In fact, they were highly appropriated by him for disseminating his doctrine of asceticism.

Evagrius presented his views of dreams in his *Praktikos*, a treatise on the practical ascetic life. His dream discourse was placed in the section after the instructions in Prayer, Observation and Asceticism and before the chapter of Practical Consideration.⁵⁵ Following his exposition of the ability of dreams to notify the soul's condition, the next chapter shows Evagrius' intention to motivate Christians to practice abstinence.

In Evagrius' programme for a monk's ascetic training, the initial stage aimed

⁵⁴ Evagrius expressed this negative attitude towards both human-inspired dreams and demon-inspired dreams, but never to the dreams inspired by the divine or angels. See his *Monks* 52 (ed. J. Driscoll, 54) and *De Diversis Malignis Cogitationibus* 28 (SC 438.252-4). According to Sozomen, Evagrius left from Constantinople to Jerusalem and then devoted himself to a life of asceticism due to the guidance of a divine-inspired dream. Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.30 (SC 495.408-12). Cf. Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 38.4-7 (PTS 51.622-4 [column 38.5-9]).

⁵⁵ The chapter titles of *Praktikos* shown here are given by Robert Sinkewicz in his *Evagrius of Pontus*, 94.

to achieve the state of ἡσυχία (stillness).⁵⁶ “Once ἡσυχία has been established as the precondition, the ascetic embarks on the long road of the practical life that will lead eventually to the attainment of impassibility [ἀπαθείας] and thereby enable him to enter upon the gnostic life,” as Robert Sinkewicz summarises.⁵⁷

But how could the monks know whether they had approached the state of dispassion (ἀπαθείας) or not? It was from this point that Evagrius offered various ways of examining the soul’s state, one of which was through dreams. Evagrius remarked, “we will recognize the signs of dispassion through our thoughts by day and through our dreams by night. And we shall say that dispassion is the health of the soul.”⁵⁸ This was because “those who are pure and free from passion no longer experience such an incident [dream fantasy].”⁵⁹ Patently, for Evagrius, if one’s soul was healthy, it should be dispassionate, and one should see no dream. Hence, one could detect the proof of his soul’s soundness or impassibility, and therefore his spiritual progress, by whether he dreams or not.

Under the standard of Evagrius’ asceticism, every Christian would surely be categorised as spiritually imperfect and weak, since everyone dreams. All Christians, especially monks, needed ascetic discipline until they could sleep without having dreams. Accordingly, after describing dreams as a means of diagnosing the soul’s state, Evagrius exhorted the anchorites to practice humility, compunction, perseverance, prudence, chastity and abstinence in order to acquire impassibility, the state which characterised the soul as sound and vigorous.⁶⁰ To him, “ascetic practice

⁵⁶ *Rerum Monachalium Rationes* 1-3 (PG 40.1252-3).

⁵⁷ Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus*, xxiv.

⁵⁸ *Praktikos* 56 (SC 171.630; trans. Sinkewicz, 107). Cf. John Cassian, *De Institutis* 6.22 (SC 109.286); Plato, *Republic* 9.571-2 (LCL 276.334-40).

⁵⁹ *De Diversis Malignis Cogitationibus* 4 (SC 438.6162-4; trans. Sinkewicz, 155); *Reflections* 2 (trans. Sinkewicz, 211). Cf. Jerome, *Epistula* 133.3 (CSEL 56/1.244-7).

⁶⁰ *Praktikos* 57-8; 68, 80 (SC 171.634-6; 652; 668).

is the spiritual method for purifying the passionate part of the soul” and thus enabled Christians to attain the level of dispassion.⁶¹

Moreover, there was a direct correlation between the state of a man’s soul and his virtue in Evagrius’ ascetic doctrine.⁶² A man of great virtue originated from a pure soul and a wicked man from a vicious soul. Ascetic virtues could render the mind blind so that it does not see the vices.⁶³ Here, dreams were employed by Evagrius as an outward and warning sign for the soul’s state. In his doctrine, there must be an imperiling vice in the unhealthy soul which dreams, but never in the healthy one which does not (see) dreams. Where dreams end, virtue begins. Dreams take place when iniquity arises. Our pursuit of virtues will never end until we commit no sin by day, and see nothing in sleep by night.

All this echoed what Evagrius underlined in the prologue of his *Praktikos*, “The fear of God strengthens faith, and abstinence in turn strengthens this fear, and perseverance and hope render abstinence unwavering, and from these [virtues] is born dispassion, which brings into being love.”⁶⁴ Ascetic practice was an essential prerequisite not only to the vitality of Christian faith, but also to the development of spiritual virtues. Dreams helped Christians recognise the degree of that development and the effect of their ascetic discipline. Only those who slept without dreaming or seeing oneiric images could be classified as saintly. Every dream showed the absence of dispassion and goaded Christian dreamers into a deeper abstinent observance.

⁶¹ Ibid. 78 (SC 171.666; trans. Sinkewicz, 110).

⁶² Ibid. 86-9 (SC 171.676-88); *De Octo Spiritibus Malitiae* 6 (PG 79.1152A-B; Sinkewicz’s column 2.19-20); *De Diversis Malignis Cogitationibus* 5-6 (SC 438.166-72).

⁶³ *Praktikos* 62 (SC 171.644). Cf. *Reflections* 2 (trans. Sinkewicz, 211).

⁶⁴ *Praktikos* prologue 8 (SC 171.490-2; trans. Sinkewicz, 96). Evagrius acknowledged that the words he proclaimed here were derived from “the holy fathers.” He mentioned his teacher Gregory of Nazianzus in the epilogue. But Guillaumont notices that Evagrius was indebted to Clement of Alexandria for this kind of schema. Antoine Guillaumont, *Évagre Le Pontique* (SC 171), 491-2, note 8.

Evagrius' ascetic exhortation, therefore, targeted every Christian, as no one could escape from dreaming. Since everyone dreams until death, ascetic discipline should never end in this life.

The methodological and hermeneutic relationship between dreams and the doctrine of asceticism in Evagrius' dream texts was stronger than that in those of Tertullian or Gregory. His dream theory involved every Christian in the situation of spiritual infirmity, and his doctrine prescribed the one and only treatment (i.e. ascetic practice) for that situation. Dreams facilitated Evagrius to spread his ascetic exhortation. His purpose for proffering the view of dreams as the indicator of the soul was mainly to undergird his ascetic doctrine.

On the other hand, dreams were totally negative in themselves or in their world, but they become greatly contributive in Evagrius' doctrine of asceticism. It was not the content of dreams or their messages or meanings, but the doctrine that attached the significance to their existence and rendered them valuable. Evidently, Evagrius' dream theory necessitated and unfolded his doctrine, while the latter annotated and fulfilled the former. Both were interdependent in Evagrius' theology.

Conclusion

Several church fathers (including Clement of Alexandria, Jerome and Gregory the Great)⁶⁵ recognised the correlation between dreams and the dreamer's somatic, mental or psychical state. Among them, Tertullian, Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom and Evagrius demonstrated and illustrated this connection most distinctly. These four church fathers substantiated the effect of one's body, mind and

⁶⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.9.78-81 (SC 108.156-62); Jerome, *Apologia contra Rufinum* 1.31 (SC 303.86-90); Gregory the Great, *Dialogorum* 4.50 (SC 265.172-6) and *Moralia in Job* 8.24.42 (CCL 143.413-4).

soul on one's dreams.

Some of these church fathers discerned that the content of dreams corresponded to the condition of the dreamer's body and mind. Dreams, for example, provided clues as to the malady of the dreamer's body. The dreamer from his dreams, just like from his stomach, could learn whether he needed (certain) food or had been surfeited. Dreams functioned as an indicative organ, while dreaming was a sensory way of accessing the message that organ relayed. Since the dreamer's somatic condition directly affected or impressed on the content of dreams, the dreamer or his doctor could diagnose his illness through his dreams.

More significantly, all these church fathers held the deep conviction that dreams could reflect the state of the dreamer's soul. Dreams operated as a constant reporter, revealing what had been received from or seen in the soul. Dreams unveiled the preoccupation and desire of the soul. They were the emblem of the dreamer's psychological trait and the signature of his spiritual disposition. Everyone who dreams had an oneiric means for gauging his soul's health or his spiritual status and its progress.

In the oneirology of these church fathers, the formation of dreams entailed the dreamer's participation physically, mentally and psychically. Because a man's condition determined his dreams, the latter could signify the former. Where there was a dream, there was a way of knowing the dreamer's holistic state — his outer and inner self. Dreams made the intercommunication between the dreamer and his body, mind or soul effective and salutary.

In this regard, dreams became the mirror of the whole man and the private, individual diagnostic tool for self-assessment as well as the tocsin of self-awareness. They assisted people in liberating their lives from alienation. Bad dreams may be an

unpleasant experience and negative reflection, but they were also a crucial reminder of the abnormality of the dreamer's condition. Hence, a man could not meet his perfect condition until he could have good health as well as good dreams. In the view of these church fathers, the nature of human-inspired dreams could be considered as the indicators of the state of the dreamer's body, mind or soul.

Furthermore, unlike Greco-Roman writers, these church fathers discussed the correlation between dreams and the dreamer's condition neither for a therapeutic nor oneirological purpose. Rather, the correlation was established or observed by them chiefly for the aim of explicating and diffusing the Christian doctrine, in particular the doctrine of asceticism. Almost all their arguments for dreams as indicators appeared in the context of their ascetic teachings. The capability that dreams could manifest the dreamer's state was endowed or acknowledged by these church fathers so as to properly usher ascetic practice into the scene of Christian daily life. Dreams then acted as a sign for Christians to perceive the state of their soul or their spiritual life so that they could easily identify the need for that practice and be spurred on by their dreams.

Sexual dreams, for example, stood for the more continent discipline. Celibate practice or abstention from sensual pleasure could result in producing pure dreams and nurturing a devout life. Abstemious discipline could induce light dreams or, for Evagrius, no dreams. Christians could not direct their dreams but could avoid having bad or unlawful dreams by refraining from something which may gratify their appetite but actually make their soul (the author of dreams) droop.

A carnal man found enjoyment from dreams or saw them as something futile or vacuous. To him, dreams were essentially entertaining or illusory. Yet, a spiritual man discovered his weakness and impurity from his dreams and regarded them as

something edifying and consultative. To him, they were intrinsically indicative and disciplinarily admonitory. Since a complete ascetic practice involved the discipline taking place in the dimensions both inside and outside the dream world, he could not see the achievement or accomplishment of his spiritual discipline until he saw in dreams only things pure and sacred. Accordingly, dreams could advise him to reach the perfection of godly life.

It seems that, for these church fathers, God made man capable of dreaming in order that he himself could be his own doctor, diagnosing the condition of his whole person through his dreams. Therefore, he may heed the demand for the improvement of that condition and then may begin an ascetic practice, which had the power to transform his life into the one that pleases and was intimate with God. This was the sacred capacity of dreams to sanctify and ascetically benefit humanity. Fittingly, dreams were correlated with the dreamer's state by these church fathers so as to propagandise their ascetic teaching to their audience.

It is clearer now that in the dream texts of these church fathers dreams and the doctrine of asceticism were connected in consideration of methodology and hermeneutics. On the one hand, through dreams this doctrine became fully pragmatic and germane to the daily life of Christians. Dreams individualised the doctrine by keeping it fit for the particular circumstances and needs of individual believers. They contextually embodied the doctrine and played a part in its actualisation and execution. They also betokened its effect and fruits. They extended its domain by expanding its scope of being needed and by enriching its practical significance. Indeed, dreams facilitated the propaganda and teachings of the doctrine.

On the other hand, ascetic doctrine endowed dreams with a teleological meaning. It developed or handled their (intrinsic) ability to indicate the dreamer's

state. It then theologically functionalised dreams and assigned them the role of its signifier and advocate. It manipulated dreams by restricting the imagination of the dreamer's soul—the creator of his dreams—as well as the desire of his body. The doctrine asceticised dreams first, then the dreamers, and in this way eventually the whole community of faith. Through the doctrine, the dreamers were purified and redeemed, and dreams were ingeniously included in the salvific realm of God.

As the medical technique of diagnosis of one's condition through one's dreams prevailed in the Greco-Roman world, these four church fathers adopted it. They, like many pagan oneiric-diagnosticians,⁶⁶ also prescribed the practice of abstinence for treatment. Nevertheless, the sharp distinction between them and those pagans lies in the fact that their ultimate goal of using this technique was not for a medical purpose, but for that of expositing and propagating the doctrine of asceticism. In their dream texts, both dreams and their indicative function catered for the doctrine, while the latter defined the former two. Dreams were ascetically doctrinalised, as the doctrine oneirically permeated into the life of each Christian. The dream language and the doctrinal language were intertwined and reciprocal. Surely, patristic views of the nature of human-inspired dreams cannot be fully understood except in reference to the early Christian doctrine of asceticism, while the doctrine cannot completely be examined without considering those views.

⁶⁶ Such as Hippocrates (*Regimen* 4.88-93 [LCL 150.422-46]), Apuleius (*Metamorphoseon* 11.30 [LCL 453.356]) and Galen (*De Dignotione ex Insomniis* [ed. Kühn, *Opera Omnia Claudii Galeni*, 832-5; trans. Oberhelman, in the appendix of "Galen, On Diagnosis from Dreams," 43-6]).

Chapter 3

Sexual Dreams as Moral Reflection and Their Relation to the Doctrine of Sin

In our dreams, any good actions we perform are without merit and our crimes are blameless. We will no more be condemned for a rape committed in a dream than we will be crowned for dreaming we were martyrs. — Tertullian, *De Anima* 45.4.

While I am awake they [sexual images] have no power into my thoughts, but in dreams they not only arouse pleasure but even elicit consent, and are very like the actual act. — Augustine, *Confessiones* 10.30.41.

The sixth [highest] degree of chastity is that he not be deluded by the alluring images of women even when asleep. For although we do not believe that this delusion is sinful, nonetheless it is an indication of a desire that is still deeply ingrained. — John Cassian, *Collationes* 12.7.4.

In comparison to other types of dreams, human-inspired sexual dreams¹ were very rarely discussed or theorised by either ancient pagan or Christian writers.² During the patristic period, Tertullian, Augustine and John Cassian addressed the issues of sexual dreams and their related phenomena (such as oneiric rape and nocturnal

¹ “Human-inspired (sexual) dream(s)” hereafter in this chapter referred to as “(sexual) dream(s),” unless specifically stated otherwise.

² For discussion of sexual dreams in Greco-Roman literature, see J. Pigeaud, “Le rêve érotique dans l’Antiquité gréco-romaine: l’oneirogmos,” in *Littérature, Médecine, Société* 3 (Nantes: Université de Nantes, 1981), 10-23.

emission) more deeply and comprehensively than any other Christian writers. These three church fathers all posited that a sexual dream could manifest the moral status quo of its dreamer, and in particular could signal the degeneration of the dreamer's moral propensity.

Moreover, most likely influenced by the Talmudic law in the Old Testament,³ many early and modern Christians consider dreaming of concupiscent images or having a nocturnal emission as sinful, resulting from excessive sexual fantasies and desires. After waking from their wet dreams, though their flesh may remain in ecstasy, their minds often feel rather guilty and shameful. They may feel too shameful to talk about them with anyone. Surprisingly, these three very conventional, orthodox or ascetical church fathers took a completely opposite stance. They found nothing in orgasmic dreams to warrant repentance. In their discourse on sin, they recognised obscene dreamers or their oneiric sexual crimes as sinless. In return, their doctrine of sin was further clarified and captured serious attention by discussing sexual dreams.

This was typically patristic oneirological methodology and hermeneutics. They methodologically exploited sexual dreams and their relevant issues as the emissaries for promoting not merely Christian sexuality, but the doctrine of sin. For the purpose of doctrinal propagation, such embarrassing subjects as erotic dreams and seminal discharge were ardently and publicly discoursed. Hermeneutically, they interpreted these dreams in accordance with the doctrine, by which the knotty problems of sexual dreams as well as nocturnal ejaculation were overcome and oneiric sinners redeemed. Their interpretations marked the birth of a new ideology of sexual dreams in late antiquity. In this chapter I argue that the nature of sexual

³ Lev 15:16-7, 15:32; Deut 23:10.

dreams in the writings of these three church fathers can be deemed as a moral reflection. I also demonstrate both methodological and hermeneutical relationships between sexual dreams and the doctrine of sin in their texts.

1. Tertullian

In Tertullian's oneirology, a man's moral fibre could be disclosed by the dreams that originated with him. Tertullian developed a dream taxonomy in which the third class contained dreams inspired by the dreamer's soul. These dreams were created by the soul "to show to itself by means of an intent contemplation of things surrounding it."⁴ The soul in dreams "pursues the lawful and the unlawful (*licita atque illicita persequitur*), and clearly exhibits that it can accomplish much without the body."⁵ Besides, a man's evil actions would be imprinted on his soul and then be reflected in his dreams. Tertullian wrote that murderers or the like "dream of nothing but the apparitions of their victims."⁶ The dreams of rapists, for example, would remind them of their evil sexual deeds.

According to Tertullian, one's soul mastered one's thought and behavior. It also operated the production of one's dreams by its own faculties. It chased its desires through the body during the day and continued to demonstrate these pursuits through dreams at night.⁷ Therefore, one's benevolent work in dreams echoed the virtuous ambition of one's soul. On the other hand, a man's unlawful dreams spoke of the wicked temperament of his soul. One's concupiscent dreams, for example,

⁴ *De Anima* 47.3 (ed. J.H. Waszink, 65; trans. E.A. Quain, *FC* 10.286).

⁵ *Ibid.* 43.12 (ed. Waszink, 61; trans. Quain, 278).

⁶ *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 16.7 (*CCL* 2.939). John Chrysostom argued that because the wicked live in vice, their dreams often abound with sundry terrors, in this way horrifying them. *Homiliae in Epistolam ad Romanos* 12.7 (*PG* 60.504). The same idea also appears in Prudentius, *Cathemerinon* 6.49-56 (*CCL* 126.30-1; *LCL* 387.50).

⁷ *De Anima* 40.2-3; 43.12 (ed. Waszink, 56-7; 60-1).

were reminiscent of the indecent thoughts with which one's soul had been concerned, or of the erotic images which it had seen or contemplated. Man's sexual dreams alluded not only to his impalpable, invisible soul's ability to do something vile and "visible" without the assistance of the tangible body, but also to his soul's immoral aspiration. Since sexual dreams could manifest what the dreamer's soul had pondered over or pined for, they could imply the dreamer's moral disposition.

Moreover, Tertullian closely related dreams as moral reflections to the doctrine of sin. His elucidations of sleep and dreams in *De Anima* (from chapter 42 to 49, in which the major part of Tertullian's dream theory was constructed) were sandwiched between his teachings about sin (chapter 39 to 41) and death, which results from sin (chapter 50 to 58, the final chapter of this book). In his teachings concerning the former subject, he contended that one's sin was derived from one's soul and body, both of which must share the blame for one's sinful thoughts or deeds. However, when he shifted the topic to dreams, he encountered difficulties in the thread of the doctrine of sin because things in dreams differed radically from those in reality, such as the fact that the dreams which teemed with transgressions had no presence or engagement with the body. He determined to offer an explanation in order to make his doctrinal rule coherent in every situation, including in dreams. Accordingly, sexual dreams were doctrinally interpreted and their dreamers (ad)dressed.

Tertullian remarked that people in dreams were "like a gladiator without his weapons or a charioteer without his team but still gesticulating the entire course and exertion of their respective employments." They "fight and struggle, but nothing happens. They appear to go through the whole performance, but they accomplish

nothing at all. There is the act, but not the effect.”⁸ He then concluded, “In our dreams, any good actions we perform are without merit and our crimes are blameless. We will no more be condemned for a rape committed in a dream than we will be crowned for dreaming we were martyrs (*Denique et bona facta gratuita sunt in somnis et delicta secunda; non magis enim ob stupri visionem damnabimur quam ob martyrii coronabimur*).”⁹

By way of this dream discourse, Tertullian argued that dreamers should never be regarded as sinners even though they commit evil deeds in sexual dreams, just as they would receive no merit from performing good deeds in decent dreams. Neither Tertullian’s principle that dreams, including obscene dreams, were generated by the dreamer’s soul nor his notion that dreams could reveal the immoral character of the soul presumed that the dreamer must bear the onus for his sinful action in dreams. The key point was both the fact that dreamers may do everything in oneiric(-virtual) reality but do nothing in actuality and the fact that dreams or their content could not be directed by the dreamer.

For instance, when a dreamer committed a rape in a sexual dream in which he discharged semen, he did nothing at all to the rape victim in reality. In fact, no one was violated by the dreamer’s oneiric assault as his real body did not participate in the crime (just as a gladiator without his weapons goes through the arena, hurting no

⁸ Ibid. 45.2 (ed. Waszink, 62; trans. P. Holmes, *ANF* 3.223). Cf. *Apologeticum* 22.5 (CCL 1.129) and *De Baptismo* 2.1 (CCL 1.277); also Gregory of Nyssa, *De Hominis Opificio* 13.8-9 (ed. G.H. Forbes, 180-2).

⁹ *De Anima* 45.4 (ed. Waszink, 62; trans. Quain, 281); Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.13 (1102a33-1102b12. *LCL* 73.60-8); Jerome, *Apologia contra Rufinum* 1.31 (SC 303.86; trans. J.N. Hritzu, *FC* 53.102): “[because] adultery in a dream does not condemn me to hell, and to dream of the crown of martyrdom does not raise me up to heaven.” John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Epistolam ad Romanos* 24.2 (PG 60,624; trans. by J. B. Morris, *NPNF* 11,519): “For he that does anything disgraceful or says the like in a dream, when he is rid of his sleep, is rid of his disgrace, also, and is not to be punished.” For an example of dreaming martyrdom, see *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* 5.2; 12.3 (ed. M.W. Holmes, 310; 318).

one).¹⁰ In terms of physical sin, he should not be culpable. Also, Tertullian believed that when we dream, we cannot be masters of ourselves. We are totally incapable of determining or dominating the content of our dreams even though it is our souls which produce dreams. He asserted, “Otherwise, dreams would have to be under control of man if they can in any way be directed.”¹¹ In other words, if a dream is a film, then the soul is neither its director nor screenwriter, but only its producer, who may have some influence on the orientation of a film, but hardly on its story or plot. Therefore, the dreamer was not the one who took the initiative in committing rape, but the one who unexpectedly and unwittingly found himself in the criminal scene and then involuntarily and oneirically became involved in the sexual crime. In terms of psychical sin, he should be blameless.

In Tertullian’s theology, sin must involve both the body and soul. They were interdependent in relation to sin. The body never sinned without the soul. The body did not merit the ignominy of sin in its own right. “For it is not of itself that it thinks or feels anything towards advising or commanding sin.”¹² Even “[in] actions done through the flesh, it is the soul which first conceives, plans, orders and precipitate them into acts...[it] never happens that an act is performed without previous consciousness.”¹³ The body was joined to the soul as an instrument for the conduct of life. The soul’s sin was therefore shared by the body due to their union.¹⁴

On the other hand, the soul could not commit a sin without the body. Sins of

¹⁰ Cf. Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram* 12.14.30 (BA 49.378), in which Augustine stated that people do not suffer any harm in dreams.

¹¹ *De Anima* 48.2 (ed. Waszink, 66; trans. Quain, 287); also 45.4 (ed. Waszink, 62).

¹² Ibid. 40.2 (ed. Waszink, 56; trans. Quain, 271).

¹³ Ibid. 58.7 (ed. Waszink, 79; trans. Quain, 308); Cf. *Adversus Marcionem* 1.24 (CCL 1.466-8).

¹⁴ *De Anima* 40.1; 40.3 (ed. Waszink, 56; 57); *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 16 (CCL 2.939-40). Cf. *De Baptismo* 4.5 (CCL 1.280).

thought which did not result in action were usually imputed to the soul alone.¹⁵

Nevertheless, Tertullian maintained that even our thoughts were brought into effect by means of the flesh since “whatever is done in man’s heart is done by the soul in the flesh, and with the flesh and through the flesh.” Apart from deed or performance, “thought is an activity of the flesh.” The Lord’s teaching that ‘whoever looks on a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart’ also attested that “the Lord Himself, when rebuking our thoughts, includes in His censures this portion of the flesh (man’s heart), the citadel of the soul.”¹⁶ Hence, the body deserved blame as “nothing is done by the soul without the flesh in operations of concupiscence, gluttony, drunkenness, cruelty, idolatry, and other works of the flesh.” These operations were not merely internal sensations but resulted in external actions.¹⁷

Under this theological tenet of Tertullian (i.e. sin involves the body and soul), dreamers could never possibly be sinners. Since a man’s oneiric wrongdoing involved neither his body nor his soul, he was exculpated for his acts in dreams. All of the above proved dreamers to be onlookers or unattempted and illusory criminals, but never actual sinners. A violently sexual dream could confirm the dreamer’s vicious moral tendency, but could not verify his sexual misconduct in dreams. This was because his immoral fibre was molded by himself, whereas his immoral deeds in dreams were neither premeditated nor performed by himself.

¹⁵ *De Anima* 40.4 (ed. Waszink, 57).

¹⁶ *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 15.4 (CCL 2.938; trans. Holmes, ANF 3.555). Here Tertullian quoted Matt 5:28. He also quoted Matt 9:4 to support the same idea. Cf. John Cassian, *Collationes* 5.3 (SC 42.190) in which Cassian wrote that certain sins can be completed without any bodily action such as pride and vainglory.

¹⁷ *De Anima* 40.3 (ed. Waszink, 57; trans. Holmes, 220). Cf. *De Resurrectione* 17 (CCL 2.941-2). Regarding this issue, Waszink’s analysis of the relation between the body and soul in Tertullian’s doctrine of sin is contentious due to his assumption that the soul is solely to blame since the body is only the instrument of the soul. Waszink, *Tertulliani*, 447-8. Edward Roberts provides a more correct analysis of it. Edward Roberts, *The Theology of Tertullian* (London: Epworth Press, 1924), 152-3.

Here we may find a parallel between Tertullian's analysis of the relation between Adam's sin and the sin of humanity. Deceived by Satan, the first man Adam transgressed the commandment of God. Owing to his sinful deed, Adam's nature was tainted. Then "he made the whole human race, which was infected by his seed, a channel for transmitting his condemnation (*damnationis traducem*)."¹⁸ In this way Adam's transgression would involve all humanity, his descendants. He bequeathed unto us this sinful nature vitiated by tendency towards sin. Consequently, we are all born as sinners and unclean.

Yet, Tertullian's language concerning "our sharing in the transgression of Adam"¹⁹ did not imply "our solidarity with the first man in his culpability (i.e. original guilt)," as John Kelly has observed.²⁰ Indeed, we did not actually participate in the sinful act of Adam, but inherited from him the sinful nature which nurtures our immoral disposition and conduct. We will never be damned for what Adam did, but only for what we have (i.e. our own sins) and have done (i.e. our own sinful acts). Likewise, dreamers themselves do not really take part in any iniquitous act committed in dreams. Therefore, they should not be condemned for oneiric misdeed, even though they do assume the responsibility for their sinful souls which can engender unlawful dreams and whose immoral inclination can be unveiled in dreams.

For Tertullian, a sexual dream could be seen as the dreamer's moral reflection but never as the proof of his sin until his sinful deed occurred in actuality, implicating both his body and soul in transgression. Under his doctrine of sin, a

¹⁸ *De Testimonio Animae* 3.2 (CCL 1.178; trans. R. Arbesmann, *FC* 10.136); also *Adversus Marcionem* 2.15 (CCL 1.492); *De Anima* 19.6; 27.4-9 (ed. Waszink, 27; 38-9); *De Pudicitia* 6 (CCL 2.1289-91); *De Ieiunio Adversus Psychicos* 3 (CCL 2.1259-60). Cf. Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram* 10.17.31-18.32 (*BA* 49.198-202). For Tertullian's theory of traducianism and his sources, see Waszink, *Tertulliani*, 342-8.

¹⁹ *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 49.6 (CCL 2.991).

²⁰ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 176.

dreamer who committed violent rape, one of the vilest sexual crimes, could find himself not guilty and feel no compunction about his abominable act. We may observe that Tertullian's interpretations of sexual dreams (as well as their dreamers) were methodologically doctrinalised. He confined his explication of people's evil deeds in sexual dreams to the thread of this doctrine.

In addition, there was a hermeneutical reciprocity between sexual dreams and Tertullian's doctrine of sin. These dreams and their content were analysed by him so as to buttress and refine his doctrine of sin. His teachings about sin in his dream texts supplemented, and also became the counterpart of, those in his other texts. On the other hand, this doctrine resolved the moral issue of sexual dreams (and oneiric crimes). It delivered obscene dreamers and characterised the dream world as the realm of sinlessness.

2. Augustine

Like Tertullian, Augustine established a relationship between dreams, particularly sexual dreams, and personal morality. While addressing oneirological concerns, he often "keeps moral implications constantly in view," as Steven Kruger observes.²¹ He asserted that people in their sleep "frequently dream of something they need. The reason for this is that greed is the motive force of their business dealings."²² One's moral attitude and character would affect the content of his dreams. Hence, dreams could faithfully display the dreamer's moral state. Augustine also gave an example based on his personal experience of orgasmic dreams.

In his *Confessiones*, Augustine, because of still dreaming of erotic things,

²¹ Kruger, *Dreaming in Middle Ages*, 44.

²² *De Genesi ad Litteram* 12.30.58 (BA 49.434; trans. J. H. Taylor, ACW 42.221).

admitted that his present moral condition remained imperfect. He stated that before he became a minister, the Lord had commanded him to abstain from the lust of the flesh.²³ Yet, sexual images still survived in his memory. He confessed, “While I am awake they [sexual images] have no power into my thoughts, but in sleep they not only arouse pleasure but even elicit consent, and are very like the actual act (*et occursantur mihi vigilanti quidem carentes viribus, in somnis autem non solum usque ad delectationem sed etiam usque ad consensionem factumque simillimum*).” The illusion of these dreams with their images “prevails to such an extent in both my soul and body that the illusion persuades me when sleeping to what the reality can never do when awaking.”²⁴

Knowing that voluptuous dreams corroded the “spiritual delight of holy souls,”²⁵ Augustine entreated God to heal his soul’s sicknesses so that even in dreams he could neither commit nor consent to “those disgraceful and corrupt acts in which sensual images provoke carnal emissions.”²⁶ Evidently, to Augustine, sexual dreams functioned as emblems which revealed the deviation of a dreamer’s morality. Every salacious dream testified to the dreamer’s moral weakness and incapability to refrain from concupiscence. Augustine himself was aware of his current moral imperfection through his erotic dreams.

Moreover, in Augustine’s dream texts, there is a clear link between sexual

²³ Cf. 1 John 2:16.

²⁴ *Confessiones* 10.30.41 (*BA* 14.214; trans. H. Chadwick [Oxford: OUP, 1992], 203 and E. B. Pusey [Minneapolis: Filiquarian Publishing], 306). Also *De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia* 2.42 (*BA* 23.236-8). Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 25 (*GCS* 17/2.175-6). Augustine’s description is very similar to that of Caesarius (archbishop of Arles from 502), who in his *Sermones* 177.4 (*CCL* 104.720; trans. M. M. Mueller, *FC* 47.446) said, “Sometimes, this evil inclination steals over even the saints and good Christians in such a way that it effects in them when they are asleep what it cannot do when they are awake. How many times they are defiled by temptations unwillingly and against their volition.”

²⁵ *Contra Iulianum* 4.2.11 (*PL* 44,741; trans. M.A. Schumacher, *FC* 35.174).

²⁶ *Confessiones* 10.30.42 (*BA* 14.216; trans. Chadwick, 204).

dreams as moral reflections and the doctrine of sin. Like Tertullian, Augustine also believed that dreaming of committing sins sexually did not implicate the dreamer, even though dreams came from the dreamer's soul and could indicate his imperfect moral state. In the view of Augustine (again exactly like that of Tertullian),²⁷ the main reason why dreamers should not be held accountable for their sinful deeds in sexual dreams depended on the fact that they were unable to curb the occurrence of immoral dreams, and also the fact that the dreamer, while dreaming of sexual sins, did not actually commit them.

Firstly, in Book XII, Chapter XV of *De Genesi ad Litteram*, Augustine probed into the moral question of sexual dreams: what if people dreamt of having carnal intercourse contrary to their good resolution and against what is lawful? He explained, "This does not happen except when there come into our dreams objects of which we also thought in our waking hours (not consenting to pleasure in them but thinking of them, as when for some reason we speak of such things)."²⁸ Then, when the sexual image (which arises from our thoughts) appears in dreams "that is indistinguishable from actual intercourse, it immediately moves the flesh, and the natural result [i.e. discharge of semen] follows." Yet Augustine emphasised, "[this] happens without sin, just as the matter is spoken of without sin by a man wide awake, who doubtless thinks about it in order to speak of it (*cum hoc tam sine peccato fiat, quam sine peccato a uigilante dicitur, quod ut diceretur sine dubio cogitatum est*)."²⁹

A similar idea was also enunciated in Augustine's *De Bono Coniugali*. Some

²⁷ Tertullian, *De Anima* 48.2; 45.4 (ed. Waszink, 66; 62).

²⁸ *De Genesi ad Litteram* 12.15.31 (BA 49.378; trans. Taylor, 198); cf. 10.25.42 (BA 49.220-2); *Natura et Origine Animae* 4.17.25 (BA 22.630-2); *Epistula* 159.1-2 (CSEL 44.497-99); also Eccl 5:3; Aristotle, *De Insomniis* 458b15-25 (ed. D. Gallop, 84-6); Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job* 8.24.42 (CCL 143.413-4) and *Dialogorum* 4.50 (SC 265.172-6).

²⁹ *De Genesi ad Litteram* 12.15.31 (BA 49.380; trans. Taylor, 199). Cf. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 17.165-167 (LCL 410.242).

of his contemporary Christians considered nocturnal discharge as a sin because they thought that “it does not happen except from some desire of this sort.” However, Augustine dismissed this kind of presumption as untenable. He insisted, “Loss of seed in sleep is not a result of sin, though in this case purification is prescribed.” According to Augustine, the fact that the Talmudic law ordered a man to be purified after emission in dreams did not mean that having a wet dream was sinful. A dreamer who emits, just like a woman who menstruates, may be ritually impure, but would never be convicted as a sinner, no matter what the content of his dream was (or what caused his night emission).³⁰

More importantly, a man with a pure soul and spiritual virtues may still dream of doing evil since he could hardly preside over oneiric activities or happenings. Augustine stated that chaste people while awake restrain the desire of their flesh, but “in their sleep they are unable to do so for they cannot control the appearance of those corporeal images that are indistinguishable from bodies (*dormientes autem ideo non possunt, quia non habent in potestate quae admouetur expressio corporalis imaginis, quae discerni non possit a corpore*).”³¹ Consequently, when sexual “dreams delude the sleeping senses, even the chaste fall into base assents.”³²

In other words, although unlawful sexual images in dreams were derived from the dreamer’s daily thoughts, and although the dreamer’s body rejoiced in such verisimilar and vivid indecent sexual intercourse, and then experienced a real orgasm and a nocturnal pollution, the dreamer remained inculpable for those erotic images or

³⁰ *De Bono Coniugali* 20.23 (CSEL 41.217-8; trans. C. T. Wilcox, FC 27.38). For nocturnal discharge, see Lev 15:16-7, 15:32; Deut 23:10; Jude 8. For female menstruation, see Lev 15:25; Ezek 18:6, 36:17.

³¹ *De Genesi ad Litteram* 12.15.31 (BA 49.380; trans. Taylor, 199).

³² *Contra Iulianum* 4.2.10 (PL 44,741; trans. Schumacher, 174). Dulaey, *Le Rêve*, 135-139.

the sinful coupling. What justified the dreamer was both that he may have thought of those sexual images in the daytime for a virtuous purpose (as a speaker, before lecturing on something about carnal intercourse, has had to think of it and its sexual images), rather than for a evil one, and that his oneiric sinful deeds occurred under circumstances which he could not master himself.

Secondly, obscene dreamers could not actually commit anything in effect. In *Confessiones*, while confessing his immoral sexual acts in dreams and acknowledging his deficient moral state, Augustine defended his sinlessness. He said to the Lord that during sleep, “surely it is not my true self” committing sins. Later, he noted, “[it] is by this difference between sleeping and waking that we discover that it was not we who did it [i.e. committed sins in dreams], while we still feel sorry that in some way it was done in us.”³³ For Augustine, since a dreamer himself never does anything real, he has not done anything evil. Accordingly, he deserved blame for his wicked soul which brought about lascivious dreams, but not for his transgressions in these dreams. He may regret what he has done immorally in these dreams, but needs not to repent of that.

Explicitly, Augustine interlaced sexual dreams with the doctrine of sin hermeneutically and methodologically. These dreams were not sexually or oneirologically interpreted at all. Rather, they were dogmatically explicated and delicately poised on the constitutional edge of the doctrine of sin. His reading of sexual dreams (including his own) was moralised and doctrinalised, while they were methodologically utilised in order to support and diffuse his teaching concerning sin. He propped his theory of erotic dreams up with this doctrine, and simultaneously stretched the doctrine into this theory. The entity of sexual dreams was then attired

³³ *Confessiones* 10.30.41 (BA 14.214; trans. Pusey, 306-7).

by his doctrine of sin, which arrayed filthy dreamers with a robe of innocence. As a result, one was responsible for one's own vicious moral tendency but never for one's delinquency in dreams. Obscene dreamers may commit all manner of evils, but nothing was required to be confessed upon awakening from these dreams.

3. John Cassian

Among church fathers, John Cassian (the founder of two monasteries in Marseilles, where his three surviving works, *De Institutis*, *Collationes*, and *De Incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium*, were composed) was the figure who explored issues of sexual dreams most deeply and who most elaborately illustrated the relationship between these dreams and the moral state of their dreamers, as well as the mechanics of how the former reflects and affects the later.³⁴ Interestingly, in his writings he was concerned with people's sexual dreams much more than with their actual sexual relations or activities.³⁵

In *De Institutis*, Cassian pointed out that the second struggle of Christians, "according to the tradition of the fathers," was against the temptation of fornication.

³⁴ Cassian presented his view of dreams mostly in the three books: *De Institutis* Book 6 (SC 109.262-88) and *Collationes* 12 and 22 (SC 54.121-46 and 64.115-35). Surprisingly, the editors of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (one of the most significant English translations of patristic writings), while translating all other extant works of Cassian, excluded these three books which contain most his discourses on (sexual) dreams. Regarding *De Institutis* Book 6 ("The Spirit of Fornication"), the editors comment, "We have thought best to omit altogether the translation of this book." Regarding *Collationes* 12 ("On Chastity"), they note, "Not translated," and regarding *Collationes* 22 ("On Nocturnal Illusions"), "This Conference is omitted." Clearly, Cassian's opinions about (sexual) dreams (as well as sexual issues) were intentionally barred or concealed by the editors. The same problem also occurs in the translations of the works of Gregory of Nazianzus and some other patristic oneirological writers. For discussion, see Morton Kelsey, *God, Dreams, and Revelation*, 99-100.

³⁵ Michael Foucault observes that nowhere in Cassian's texts "in which he speaks of the battle for chastity does he refer to actual sexual relations." Cassian's discussion of sexual issues lacks two major elements on which are centred the sexual ethic of "a Christian like Clement of Alexandria, namely the sexual union of two individuals and the pleasure of the act." Michael Foucault, "The Battle for Chastity," in *Western Sexuality*, ed. by Philippe Ariès and André Béjin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 18-20.

This struggle was longer than the other eleven, and only a few could succeed. To overcome this temptation required the discipline of both the body and soul, as physical chastisement alone did not suffice to procure the purity of perfect chastity unless it was preceded by a psychical one. Hence, first of all, the hidden places of our hearts had to be purified by a contrite spirit and through persevering prayer.³⁶

Cassian then pronounced, “It will be a clear sign and a full proof of this purity [the purity of perfect chastity] if either no unlawful image occurs to us as we lie at rest and relaxed in slumber or at least, when one does surface, it does not arouse any feelings of lust (*Cuius puritatis hoc erit evidens indicium ac plena probatio, si uel nulla imago inliciens quietis nobis et in soporem laxatis occurrat, uel certe interpellans nullos concupiscentiae motus ualeat excitare*).” He continued, “For although a disturbance of this kind should not be accounted as really sinful, it is nonetheless the sign of an as yet imperfect mind and an indication of vice that has not been totally purified...”³⁷

A few chapters later, he wrote, “The culmination and perfect proof of purity is if while we are asleep, no pleasurable titillation creeps up on us, and, while we are unconscious, there is no filthy product [seminal emission] of nature’s requirement (*Itaque hic est integritatis finis ac perfecta probatio, si quiescentibus nobis titillatio uoluptatis nulla subrepserit ac pro necessitate naturae nobis inconsciis concrectiones egerantur obscenae*).”³⁸ In *Collationes*, Cassian referred in a similar way to those who acquire the fullness of purity and serenity in the face of oneiric sexual temptation. He related that when a disturbance of flesh triggered by provocative images looms in their dreams, “just as it was aroused without any pleasurable

³⁶ *De Institutis* 6.1; 6.4 (SC 109.262; 266-8).

³⁷ Ibid. 6.10 (SC 109.274; trans. Ramsey, ACW 58.157).

³⁸ Ibid. 6.20 (SC 109.284; trans. Ramsey, 161).

titillation, so likewise it would return to calm without any bodily sensuality.”³⁹

In light of Cassian’s oneirology, the loftiest moral and spiritual state of a dreamer could be defined as: dreaming of nothing but the ethical, and the second loftiest as: seeing all kinds of dreams, especially erotic dreams, as the same, which could neither move nor lure him. The dreamer who reached such a high level of morality would either have no erotic dreams or treat them with total indifference. He could dream of sexual intercourse without having a sensational fluctuation. From here, a moral hierarchy of dreamers, in which sexual dreams played a decisive part in the ranking criteria, was invented for the first time in Christian history.

Along with this moral hierarchy of dreamers, Cassian also constructed a six-fold classification of chastity. The first degree of chastity was that “the monk not to be undone by carnal attacks while awake;” the second, “his mind not dwell upon pleasurable thoughts;” the third, “he not be moved to desire, even slightly, by looking upon a woman; the fourth “he not permit a movement of the flesh, however simple, while awake;” the fifth, “when a discussion or some necessary reading evokes the thought of human generation, a very subtle assent to the pleasurable action not come upon the mind.”⁴⁰ Finally, the sixth and highest degree of chastity was that “he not be deluded by the alluring images of women even when asleep. For although we do not believe that this delusion is sinful, nonetheless it is an indication of a desire that is still deeply ingrained (*Sextus castimoniae gradus est, ne inlecebrosis phantasmatibus feminarum uel dormiens inludatur. Licet enim hanc ludificationem peccato esse obnoxiam non credamus, concupiscentiae tamen adhuc medullitus*

³⁹ *Collationes* 12.16.2 (SC 54.145; trans. Ramsey, *ACW* 57.454); also see 12.10.2; 12.11.4-5 (SC 54.136-7; 139). Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 4.22.138-9 (SC 463.286-8; trans. Wilson, *ANF* 2.434): “Such an one is no longer continent, but has reached a state of passionlessness, . . . never be perturbed with passion, even in dreams; but also to keep the life of the night pure and stainless.”

⁴⁰ *Collationes* 12.7.3 (SC 54.131-2; trans. Ramsey, 443).

latitantis indicium est).”⁴¹

Here again, Cassian repeated his belief that the appearance of concupiscent images in a man’s dreams indicated his moral deficiency which rendered him vulnerable to oneiric sexual temptations. Accordingly, he could approach his oneiric sexual images “much as a doctor felt the pulse to learn about his patient’s true condition,” as Peter Brown aptly remarked.⁴²

Moreover, according to the difficulty levels of the tasks of Cassian’s chaste discipline, a monk should find it easier to uphold somatic or mental purity since carnal contact with a woman in monasteries was inaccessible and luring thoughts could be suppressed by nightly psalms and constant prayers. The most arduous task for a monk was undertaken in the domain of sexual dreams because in dreams not only could he freely have sexual activity with a woman without observation, he could also readily be seduced due to his inability to pray while sleeping. In (sexual) dreams he simply could not master his bodily movement or mental thoughts.

A monk would hold the highest rank of morality and chastity if he was neither beguiled nor affected by oneiric voluptuous images. The key to attaining this perfection was his control in sexual dreams of genital movement as well as of seminal discharge. Patently, within the scheme in which both Cassian’s moral hierarchy of dreamers and his chastity classification were established, orgasmic dreams (though they were probably the one and only acceptable means of sexual

⁴¹ Ibid. 12.7.4 (SC 54.132; trans. Ramsey, 443). Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 4.22.142.4 (SC 463.294; trans. W. Wilson, *ANF* 2.435): “For sanctity, as I conceive it, is perfect pureness of mind, and deeds, and thoughts, and words too, and in its last degree sinlessness in dreams (καὶ τελευταία ἡ κατὰ τὰ ἐνύπνια ἀναμαρτησία).” Origen also asserted that a holy man who has reached perfection will be free from nocturnal temptation or pollution. *Commentarii in Psalmos* 16:7 (PG 12,1217-20). Yet, Jerome reproached Origen bitterly for this idea. Jerome, *Epistula*, 133.3 (CSEL 56/1.244-7).

⁴² Peter Brown, *Body and Society*, 421.

relief for monks)⁴³ were presupposed as the bitterest and ultimate enemy of monks in their disciplinary lives.

In addition, Cassian exhorted his monks that everyone who fights in the spiritual contest must abstain from anything which could severely sully their spiritual and moral purity, especially the contamination of sexual activity. Most likely speculating that sexual intercourse in his monasteries could only occur in dreams, Cassian attached great importance to nocturnal chastity. He advised his monks to “cover their loins with lead plates, lest perchance a nocturnal emission caused by a dream diminish the strength which they have acquired over a long period, so that the contact of the cold metal on their genitals may inhibit the shameful liquid (*quo scilicet metalli rigor genitalibus membris adplicitus obscenos umores ualeat inhibere*).”⁴⁴

Cassian’s advice was distinctly targeted at morally weak monks, as vigorous ones would not be afflicted by sexual dreams (for sexual images would not appear in their dreams or could not affect them while appearing). His solution to this problem

⁴³ Two reasons why orgasmic dreams were probably the only acceptable way for a monk to obtain sexual relief: firstly, a monk in these dreams did not have any real physical contact with the body of another person (bodily sexual intercourse) or with his own genital organ (masturbation). Hence he, in the process of sexual satisfaction in these dreams, did not commit adultery or any moral misconduct. Nor did he violate his vows of celibacy. Secondly, in these dreams he did not transgress any prohibition against having sexual fantasies or indulgence because the content of these dream was not the product of his consciousness. Nor could he control (or make) his own dreams or their content. He unwittingly and involuntarily had (or encountered) these dreams and then uncontrollably experiences nocturnal discharge.

⁴⁴ *De Institutis* 6.7 (SC 109.270-2; trans. Ramsey, 156). For nocturnal ejection sully the purity of monks also see *De Institutis* 3.5.1 (SC 54.106) and *Collationes* 12.6.7; 20.12.2 (SC 54.130; SC 64.71). Clement of Alexandria mentioned Astylus of Croton (a winner of three successive Olympic Games) and Crison of Himera (a runner of Olympics) as examples of abstaining from sexual intercourse in order to maintain physical strength. *Stromata* 3.6.50 (GCS 15.219). Clement’s source may be Plato’s *Laws* 8.840 (LCL 192.162-4) and *Protagoras* 335-6 (LCL 165.172-6). Concerning the lead plates, Pliny the Elder, in his *Naturalis Historia* 34.50.166 (LCL 394.246), commented that lead, due to its cold nature, “will restrain the venereal passions, and put an end to libidinous dreams at night, attended with spontaneous emissions, and assuming all the form of a disease.” Cf. Caelius Aurelianus, *On Chronic Diseases* 5.7 (ed. I. E. Drabkin [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950], 958-62). Also, *Benedicti Regula* 22 (ed. John Chamberlin [Toronto: Published for the Centre for Medieval Studies by the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982], 40-1) advises that monks should “gird with their girdles” during sleep.

was the wearing of chilly metal plates, in order to avoid reaching an orgasm or discharging semen when dreaming of erotic images. These plates (like chastity belts in the Middle Ages) were intended to quench one's lustful passion and defend one's chastity. It seemed that his monks would easily maintain their moral purity as long as their oneiric sexual activity was tackled and their nocturnal spontaneous discharge repressed.

Under Cassian's monastic institutes, a monk was expected to wear metal plates all the time, as sexual images could emerge anytime; otherwise, he might lose his vigor (due to ejaculation) and thus his spiritual contest. For a soldier, metal plates aimed to protect from outside-in attacks, but for a monk, from inside-out attempts. A monk's own genital organs became his mortal enemy (which his "armour" protected against) in spiritual warfare, and his natural semen became "the vile fluid."⁴⁵ The wearing on the loins of metal armour was perhaps the most distinguishing feature of Cassian's monks and his monasteries.

The analysis of Cassian's dream texts up to this point has attested to his notion that sexual dreams could hint at the moral state of their dreamers. Yet, Cassian also closely associated these dreams with the doctrine of sin. Other than to disseminate his monastic rules concerning moral purity, his aim in canvassing sexual dreams was primarily to convey his doctrinal thoughts regarding sin. For example, in *Collationes XXII* (chapter 1 to 7), he discoursed on sexual dreams in order to answer the questions of whether or not those who have wet dreams are sinful and whether or not they can be allowed to receive Holy Communion. Later (chapter 8 to 16, the final

⁴⁵ *Collationes* 21.35 (SC 64.111). Noteworthy, although Cassian established a strict monastic rule about total abstinence from sexual activity, he rejected the idea that monks voluntarily have themselves castrated. In fact, he harshly criticises the eunuchs as the lukewarm, who "consider themselves to stand in no need of either the effort of bodily abstinence or a contrite heart." *Collationes* 4.17; 12.5 (SC 42.181-2; trans. Ramsey, 166; SC 54.126). Cf. Justin, *Apologia* 1.29 (ed. P Parvis, 160). For Origen's orchietomy, see Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.8 (SC 41.95-7).

chapter of this conference), he deliberated on the sin of humanity and the issue that no one but Christ was without sin.

Like Tertullian and Augustine, Cassian considered dreaming of sensual images or doing immoral deeds in sexual dreams “not as really sinful” even though it indicated the dreamer’s imperfect moral disposition.⁴⁶ He ascribed the culpability of one’s wet dreams to one’s gluttony and neglect, rather than to the one who dreams. Firstly, Cassian expressed the view that a man’s “vice of gluttony” might bear the blame for his nocturnal pollution caused by sensuous dreams. For when a man partook of a large amount of food, his bladder would be excessively stored with the “vile moisture.” What had been amassed within him through overeating would inevitably be evacuated in accordance with the physical law of nature which did not permit an excess of any superfluous fluid. During sleep, this bodily condition might enkindle some irritation and provoke concupiscent images in order to induce nightly ejection, enabling the excessive moisture to be expelled. In this sense, the guilt for both his vile dreams and unclean emission lay with his voracity.⁴⁷

Cassian firmly believed that when “there is no repletion in the matter of eating,” nightly emission would be generated more infrequently. If monks always remained disciplined through consistent abstemiousness, nocturnal pollution would rarely come upon them, “not more than three times a year.” Even if it occurred; it would not provoke any sexual excitement or perverse image at all.⁴⁸ Therefore, he suggested, “We should not only keep from richer dishes but also be temperate

⁴⁶ *De Institutis* 6.10 (SC 109.274); *Collationes* 12.7.4 (SC 54.132).

⁴⁷ *Collationes* 2.23.1; 12.11.4-5; 22.3.1-3; 22.6.4-5 (SC 42.134; SC 54.139; SC 64.116-7; 122-3); *De Institutis* 3.5.1 (SC 109.106). Clement of Alexandria also posited that the blame for one’s harmful dreams must be placed on one’s overindulgence of food. *Paedagogus* 2.9.80-1 (SC 108.158-62). Cf. Gregory the Great’s idea about the dreams which are generated by “a full stomach.” *Moralia in Job* 8.24.42 (CCL 143.413-4) and *Dialogorum* 4.50 (SC 265.172-6). However, Gregory did not consider these dreams as negative or harmful, but as “morally neutral.” Kruger, *Dreaming in Middle Ages*, 47.

⁴⁸ *Collationes* 2.23.1; 22.6.5 (SC 42.134; SC 64.123; trans. Ramsey, 102; 769).

regarding more common foods.” Also “an excessive drinking even of water itself should be curbed.”⁴⁹ In his monastic regimen, as might be expected, fasting was strongly recommended. A monk’s fasting could efficiently prevent him from spouting semen and thus from soiling his purity. It benefitted him in his continent discipline by abating fleshly impetus to sexual desire.

Secondly, Cassian argued that when some oneiric obscene fantasy arises, “guilt must not be imputed to sleep” or the dreamer, but to his negligence during the preceding waking time.⁵⁰ This conviction was reiterated in *Collationes* in which Cassian stated that sexual impurity “sometimes creeps up on those who are sleeping or awake, without even touching a woman, due to the negligence of a heedless mind (*nonnumquam absque ullo mulieris tactu uel dormientibus uel uigilantibus per incuriam incircumspectae mentis obrepit*).”⁵¹ The root of non-physical sexual misconduct, no matter when (during waking or dreaming) or where (in mental imaginations or in erotic dreams) it occurred, was thus traced to one’s oversight, instead of one’s dreaming activity.

In Cassian’s opinion, morbid dream fantasy was first derived from, or fostered by, the evil thoughts of which a man had carelessly partaken in the daytime, and subsequently was concealed in the hidden depths of his soul. Thereupon, the relaxation of sleep brought it forth to the surface, turning it into visible images seen

⁴⁹ Ibid. 12.11.4-5; 22.3.2 (SC 54.139; SC 64.116-7; trans. Ramsey, 449;764). Cf. Ezek 4:10-11. The remedial prescription of restraint of food and water for preventing nocturnal emission or sexual desire, see Tertullian, *De Ieiunio Adversus Psychicos* 1 and 9 (CCL 2.1257 and 2.1265-7); Evagrius, *Monks* 102 (ed. J. Driscoll, 63) and *Praktikos* 17 (SC 171.542); Augustine, *Contra Iulianum* 4.14.70-1 (PL 44.773-4). *Verba Seniorum* (*The Sayings of the Fathers*) 5.31 (PL 73,881). This kind of prescription may originate with Greco-Roman physicians, such as Soranus of Ephesus, whose teaching about remedies for nocturnal emission was preserved by Caelius Aurelianus in his book *On Chronic Diseases* 5.7 (ed. Drabkin, 958-62). See David Brakke, “The Problematization of Nocturnal Emissions in Early Christian Syria, Egypt, and Gaul,” in *J ECS* 3:4 (1995), 423-4.

⁵⁰ *De Institutis* 6.11 (SC 109.274). Cf. Basil, *Regulae Fusius Tractatae* 37 (PG 31.1009-16), in which Basil implied that our sleep or dreaming can be sinful.

⁵¹ *Collationes* 12.2; 12.16.2 (SC 54.122; 54.145; trans. Ramsey, 436).

by him in dreams. Hence, filthy dreams did not manifest the dreamer's sin, but his soul's hidden fevers of lustful emotion, which he negligently contracted when he had been fed all day long with harmful thoughts.⁵²

Cassian also paralleled the inception of one's sinful acts in dreams with that of one's bodily illness, "which does not originate at the moment when it [or its symptoms] appears but is contracted as the result of one's past carelessness when one has foolishly eaten unhealthful food and has placed oneself in contact with evil and deadly humors."⁵³ In the same way, indecent dreams were incubated by an ailing soul due to its unwatchfulness and inability to preclude evil thoughts, rather than by the one who saw them.

Concerning the onus for nightly emission, many of Cassian's contemporaries placed it on the nature of bodily functions. They said that the discharge of the flesh happened to dreamers "not because an illusion caused by dreams produces it but rather because an excess of that moisture makes something alluring arise in a sickly heart."⁵⁴ However, Cassian positively rejected this idea. He proclaimed that this discharge was never necessarily and ineluctably part of the natural human condition, but was "introduced by bad habits and by youthful heedlessness." Those who attributed this discharge to the force of nature, and their own immoderation to the necessity of the flesh, were preaching a deceptive idea, inferring that God, the Creator of human nature, should take all liability. To Cassian, it was our "own sinful negligence" which drove us to filthy behavior and thoughts which somehow

⁵² *De Institutis* 6.11 (SC 109.274). Origen also conceived that those who are not taking heed with the soul are easily defiled by their dreams. *Commentarii In Iohannem* 10.24 (GCS 4.196-7). John Chrysostom also ascribed harmful oneiric images to one's neglect of watching over his soul. *Homiliae in Matthaeum* 42.4 (PG 57.455-6).

⁵³ *De Institutis* 6.11 (SC 109.274; trans. Ramsey, 157-8).

⁵⁴ *Collationes* 12.7.7 (SC 54.133; trans. Ramsey, 444).

nourished erotic dreams and then incurred nightly shameful emission.⁵⁵ Sinful was one's carelessness, not one's physical nature or manner of dreaming.

Noticeably, for Cassian, it was not the dreamer but his gluttony and unawarefulness that were culpable for his oneiric indecency. Yet, since overeating could be rectified and negligence averted, it was possible for one to eschew nocturnal discharge. The monk (such as abba Serenus)⁵⁶ who achieved the summit of chastity would "not produce any disgusting fluid at all" and thus never be "polluted by the emission of this fluid" because his mind "would be so stamped with the purity of chastity that even the natural movement of the flesh would have died (*castitatis ipsius puritate formetur, ut etiam ipso naturali motu carnis emortuo*).” As he mounted to this inviolable purity, no illusory dreams would lead him astray when he was asleep. In him, “there is a calm without any hint of disturbance, and a steady and firm peace is granted the victor.”⁵⁷

In this regard, moral virtues altered somatic nature. They transformed the sinful essence of the body into a morally perfect one, in which the flesh would not function naturally any more with respect to the condition that its genital organs would never emit semen. The victory in the spiritual and moral contest belonged solely to the one who remained sexually nonfunctional or impotent (resulting from the death of his natural bodily movement). It was precisely this impotence which

⁵⁵ Ibid. 12.8.1-2 (SC 54.133-4). Cassian, in *De Institutis* 3.5.1 (SC 109.106), recognised that an excess of natural moisture may be the cause of nightly emission. However, he never imputed nocturnal pollution to one's bodily natural function, but always to one's negligence.

⁵⁶ Cassian mentioned abba Serenus as an exemplary monk who reached the pinnacle of chastity. *Collationes* 7.1; 12.7. 6 (SC 42.244; SC 54.132).

⁵⁷ Ibid. 12.7.6; 12.10.2; 12.16.2; 22.3.2-3 (SC 54.132, 137, 145; SC 64.116; trans. Ramsey, 444, 447, 454, 764). Cf. Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram* 12.15.31 (BA 49.378-80) and *Confessiones* 10.30.42 (BA 14.214-6). Augustine may have disbelieved that such a morally perfect person (like abba Serenus) free from sexual temptation had ever existed after Adam's fall. He never thought that the complete deliverance of sexual temptation would occur in this life. Peter Brown, *Body and Society*, 422-3.

witnessed his possession of the extraordinary power to overcome the sinful negligence of his soul or mind during awakening and the shameful movement of his body during sleeping.

Finally, with regard to the question of whether or not the monk who had been sullied in his sleep by an emission should partake of the Body of Christ,⁵⁸ Cassian's answer depended on the origin of his emission. In his theory, there were only three causes for nocturnal emission: gluttony, negligence and the devil's assault. Only in the situation where the monk's emission originated from the last cause, was he inculpable.⁵⁹ For the sake of maintaining the holiness of the Communion service and ensuring its recipient sinless, the monastic elders (Cassian called them "spiritual physicians [*spiritalium medicorum*]"')⁶⁰ could interrogate this monk about his dreams and his ejaculation (the most private experience and matter in his life), disregarding personal privacy.⁶¹ For when it concerned the matter of sin, secrecy and opacity could not be permitted. No monk in a monastery should ever see "himself in secret as he would blush to be seen by men, and that inescapable eye [of God] does not see anything in him that he would wish to be hidden from human gaze."⁶²

After careful examination by these elders, the monk would not be admitted into Holy Communion if his emission arose from the former two causes, either of which rendered him sinful.⁶³ Hence, a monk should refrain from a surfeit of food as

⁵⁸ In early Christianity, this question and its solution probably first appeared in the third-century Syrian document *Didascalia Apostolorum* 26. See Brakke, "Nocturnal Emissions," 420.

⁵⁹ The issue of demon-inspired sexual dreams will be discussed in the next chapter of this thesis.

⁶⁰ *Collationes* 22.6.2 (SC 64.122).

⁶¹ Ibid. 22.5-6 (SC 64.119-25). A monk is required to disclose all his thoughts to the elders, otherwise he will be highly vulnerable to demonic attack. *De Institutis* 4.9-10 (SC 109,132-4). Yet, Goodrich has observed that Cassian has nothing to say about who controls or supervises the elders, or at what point a monk may cease to disclose his thoughts or to be a virtual slave to an elder. Richard Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 205, note 275.

⁶² *Collationes* 12.8.5 (SC 54.135; trans. Ramsey, 446).

⁶³ Ibid. 22.3-6 (SC 64.116-25). To support his answer, Cassian cited Lev 7:19-20 (LXX) and Deut 23:11-12. Cf. Origen, *Selecta in Ezechielem* 7.2 (SC 352.252-4); see Boniface Ramsey, *John*

well as exercise the most cautious watchfulness so as to thwart unclean emissions and to maintain his purity unstained, particularly at the moment when he is preparing himself for Holy Communion.⁶⁴

Cassian's teaching on wet dreams in the sacramental context found a particular echo in Egypt, where several Christian writers and abbots proposed or adopted a similar instruction.⁶⁵ Dioscorus, a fourth-century abbot in a monastery in Thebaid, can be regarded as representative, as his succinct teaching seems to be the paradigm of how they generally responded to this issue. Dioscorus' teaching can properly serve as a summary of Cassian's view at the end of our analysis of his dream texts, and is worth quoting in full:

Take care that no one who has pondered on the images of a woman during the night dare to approach the sacred Mysteries, in case any of you has had a dream while entertaining such an image. For seminal emissions do take place unconsciously without the stimulus of imagined forms, occurring not from deliberate choice but involuntarily. They arise naturally and flow forth from an excess of matter. They are therefore not to be classed as sinful. But imaginings are the result of deliberate choices and are a sign of an evil disposition. Now a monk must even transcend the law of nature and must certainly not fall into the slightest pollution of the flesh. On the contrary, he must mortify the flesh and not allow an excess of seminal fluid to accumulate. We should therefore try to keep the fluid

Cassian (*ACW* 57), 781, footnote 22.4; (Pseudo-)Justin, *Quaestiones et Responsiones ad Orthodoxos* 21 (*PG* 6.1265-8); *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* 16.1; 20.1-4 (ed. A. J. Festugière, 112; 118-9). Gregory the Great discussed this question in some detail. *Registri Epistularum* 11.64 (*PL* 77.1183-1200). Gregory's answer is also cited in Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* 1.27.9 (ed. B. Colgrave, 98-100). Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae* 3.6 (*CCL* 111.215-220); Le Goff, *L'imaginaire Médiéval*, 309.

⁶⁴ *Collationes* 22.5.1 (*SC* 64.119-20).

⁶⁵ Such as Dionysius of Alexandria (*Canonical Letters* 3-4), Athanasius (*Epistula to Amun* [*PG* 26.1169-76]) and Timothy of Alexandria (*Quaestiones* 12 [ed. P. Joannou, 247-8]). Timothy's instruction particularly resembles that of Cassian. For discussion, see Stephen Morris, "Sex and Holy Communion in Late Antiquity," in *Studia Patristica*, Vol. XL, ed. by P. Parvis, etc. (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 63-4. David Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 90-9 and "Nocturnal Emissions," 433-46.

depleted by the prolongation of fasting. Otherwise, it arouses our sensual appetites.⁶⁶

Plainly, Cassian's thorough investigation of sexual dreams was deeply concerned about the doctrine of sin. According to his doctrinal teachings, obscene dreamers were not sinners but the victims of their intemperance or neglect. However, because an emission in sleep would diminish a monk's physical and spiritual strength as well as severely defile his moral purity, a monastic regimen or diet was designed. This was intended to quell the disturbance of sexual dreams, rather than to help monks achieve good health. Likewise, bitterly cold metal plates were devised for a similar end. Monks were also directed to fast with the approach of participation in Holy Communion so as to restrain from nocturnal discharge.

Sexual dreams, their morality and the doctrine of sin were methodologically integrated and hermeneutically related to one another in Cassian's dream texts. In his monastic oneirology, even a natural intrinsic seminal liquid per se was referred to as a vile substance, and a spontaneous nocturnal emission to an immoral incident. This oneirology morally de-naturalised seminal liquid and de-sexualised genital function. Consequently, only a sexually impotent monk could be a morally omnipotent saint, like abba Serenus. On the other hand, in his doctrinalised oneirology, even the monk who dreamt of having a vile sexual intercourse and then was soiled by nocturnal pollution may find himself guiltless. Through the dialogue between sexual dreams and the doctrine of sin, a moral dimension of dreaming was scrutinised, and the sinlessness of dreamers verified. While his oneirology paved the way for his doctrine, the latter consummated the former.

⁶⁶ *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* 20.1-3 (ed. Festugière, 118-9; trans. N. Russell, 105).

Conclusion

Despite being an embarrassing and rarely-discussed topic in the ancient world as well as in the early Church, sexual dreams were publicly addressed by Tertullian, Augustine and especially Cassian, who articulated a relatively clear and in-depth view of them. Their relevant discourses together formed a coherent Christian theory of sexual dreams. In this theory, only the morally imperfect would dream of unlawful things.⁶⁷ A man's sexual dream faithfully represented the weakness of his moral fibre. It was an admonitory message informing him of the need to salvage both his morality and spirituality from deviation.

On the other hand, anyone who possessed moral purity in their entirety would not dream of sensuous images or be affected by them if they loomed. In order to achieve the highest chaste rank, a monk had to preclude himself from having sexual dreams or nocturnal emission. His task could be facilitated by wearing lead plates on the loins at all times. Clearly, in this theory the nature of human-inspired sexual dreams could be reckoned as an indicator of the dreamer's moral disposition. They provided Christians (especially monks and their elders) a method by which their moral level could be discerned. Theologically, they functioned for moral awakening and improvement.

Moreover, these three church fathers discussed sexual dreams mostly in the context of the doctrine of sin. They had little interest in explaining the phenomenon of sexual dreams, but expressed a considerable fascination for its relationship to or involvement with sin. These dreams were ventilated by them exclusively for

⁶⁷ Cf. Plato, *Republic* 9.571B-572B (LCL 276.334-8); Aristotle, *Problems* 957a25-27 (LCL 317.180); Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 9.454-516 (LCL 43.34-8).

contributing to the doctrinal debate about whether or not their dreamers were sinners.

Astonishingly, these church fathers did not regard moral turpitude in dreams as sins nor the dreamers who committed evil deeds as sinners.⁶⁸ It was not the erotic dreamer, but his negligent soul or his gluttony, either of which had previously sown the seeds of both prurient images and nocturnal emission before they arose in his sleep, that ought to be liable for his oneiric sexual vice. For them, the fact concerning a man dreaming of raping someone was that he rather involuntarily and unwittingly appeared in a sinful spectacle and became innocently embroiled in committing this crime. In actuality, neither his body nor soul engaged in plotting or conducting this sexual crime. Nor did anyone really suffer from this incident.

Accordingly, there was no reason for an oneiric rapist to repent (though something to regret for his wicked soul) after awakening from the dream in which he had raped many, and his flesh had really experienced a seminal ejaculation. People should not be condemned for their oneiric vile deeds which never happened in reality, just as they should not be venerated for their oneiric benevolent works. Those who sinned in dreams could be labeled as the morally infirm, rather than as sinners.

Notwithstanding the fact that universality of human sinfulness had been a fundamental tenet of the Christian doctrinal scheme since the very beginning of Church history, it was crippled in patristic oneirology. Sins permeated into every part of human life excluding the part of human dreams. They seemed to be everywhere in sexual dreams, but to be nowhere verified. In dreams, there could be anything but a sin. The dominion of dreams was probably the only place where people were

⁶⁸ On the other hand, some other church fathers considered the oneiric evil deeds as sins and the dreamers as sinners. For examples, see Caesarius of Arles, *Sermones* 177.4 (CCL 104.720); Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae* 3.6 (CCL 111.215-220). Nevertheless, no matter which side they stood on, most church fathers, when discussing sexual dreams, attempted mainly to present their doctrinal thoughts on human sin or moral decline.

incapable of committing sins or inculpable for their sinful deeds. Outside this dominion, all humans were totally sinners. It was this sinlessness or dis-sinfulness that made this dominion so unique that it found no counterpart in patristic theology.

Obviously, sexual dreams and the doctrine of sin were methodologically and hermeneutically woven together in the writings of these three church fathers. In terms of methodology, they exerted sexual dreams and the related phenomena (such as nocturnal emission) to demonstrate or promulgate their doctrine of sin. Sexual dreams and nocturnal emission, either of which were probably the most privatised experience and most unutterable matter in monasteries as well as in society, were treated as public and communal affairs in order to illuminate their implications of the doctrine of sin. Consequently, this doctrine was extended and successfully infiltrated into the most private sphere of individual life.

In terms of hermeneutics, by their doctrine of sin they interpreted sexual dreams and resolved the relevant issues (such as oneiric rape). Their doctrine moralised concupiscent dreams and forgave all oneiric iniquities. It was atonement for their immoral dreamers and light for their inmost darkness. It deconstructed individual boundaries, especially those between monks, by means of doctrinalising their sexual dreams and nocturnal discharge, probably two of the most unmentionable things among monks. Within it, nothing was too embarrassing to be publicly canvassed or too personal to be communally accessible; the private domain had to be suspended, and self-disclosure was required.

Most impressively, the oneirology of these church fathers turned the congenital nature of seminal liquid or emission (caused by sexual dreams) into a disgraceful one, while their doctrine of sin converted the indecent nature of obscene dreams into a sinless one, and their dreamer into an innocent. Through the dialectic

between sexual dreams as a moral reflection and their dreamers as the sinless, patristic oneirology and the early Christian doctrine of sin were deliberately integrated and reciprocal.

Unlike Greco-Roman dream theorists (e.g. Artemidorus), philosophers (e.g. Pliny the Elder) or physicians (e.g. Soranus of Ephesus),⁶⁹ Tertullian, Augustine and Cassian did not sexually or naturally expound erotic dreams. Nor did they physiologically or medically unravel the mystery of wet dreams. Rather, they doctrinally construed these dreams as something germane to Christian faith. Through their dream discourse, a new ideology of sexual dreams was developed in the late antique world. It was new or unique not because its sexual mores had a massive rupture with earlier ones, but because of its significant doctrinal involvement. The making of the patristic oneirology of sexual dreams was essentially the magnification of the early Christian doctrine of sin. Undoubtedly, the task of delving into patristic views of human-inspired sexual dreams cannot be successfully completed until we analyse these dreams in the framework of the doctrine of sin. Likewise, this doctrine cannot be fully inspected without undertaking that task.

⁶⁹ Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 1.78-80, 4.4, 4.9, 4.20, 4.65, 4.83-4, 5.31, 5.87 (ed. R.A. Pack, 86-98; 247-8; 249-50; 253-4; 287-8; 298-300; 308-9; 323); Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* 34.50.166 (*LCL* 394.246); Soranus of Ephesus's teachings, see Caelius Aurelianus, *On Chronic Diseases* 5.7 (ed. Drabkin, 958-62).

Chapter 4

Dreams as a Means of Demonic Assault, Temptation and Deception and Their Relation to Demonology

Therefore, just as the mercy of God abounds for the pagans, so the temptations of the devil attack the saints; he never relaxes his malignant efforts, trying to trap them in their sleep, if unable to assault them when they are awake.

— Tertullian, *De Anima* 47.2.

They [demons] send either dreams full of terror in order that they may be invoked, or dreams which come true in order that they may be venerated the more. — Lactantius, *Epitome Divinarum Institutionum* 28.

Against the demon who during the sleep of the night makes me a shepherd of a flock and who during the day explains to me this dream...

— Evagrius, *Antirrhethikos* 7.26.

He was so deceived by diabolical revelations and dreams, ..., that he relapsed wretchedly into Judaism and the circumcision of the flesh. — Cassian, *Collationes* 2.8.

Demon-inspired dreams¹ abound in Greco-Roman literature whereas they are totally absent in either Hellenistic Jewish or biblical writings, in which even nightmares are

¹ “Demon-inspired dream(s)” hereafter in this chapter referred to as “dream(s),” unless specifically stated otherwise. The term demon or daemon (δαίμων) was used by pagans to denote a spiritual being, either good or evil. But most church fathers considered demons all evil.

engendered by the divine, rather than the devil.² This Greco-Roman oneirological tradition was maintained by many church fathers who audaciously overstepped the conventional boundary of biblical oneirology. Among them, Tertullian, Lactantius, Evagrius, Augustine and John Cassian were remarkable for their detailed discussions of these dreams. These church fathers posited that the devil had the power to exert dreams to attack, seduce or delude humanity. Their discourses on dreams further extended the domain of traditional Christian oneirology.

Yet, unlike Greco-Roman dream theorists, these church fathers were not intrigued by the phenomena, content or interpretations of demonic dreams but by their utility to facilitate the dissemination of the doctrine of demons. They believed that their teachings about demons would become much in demand as demonic dreams could effectively torment Christians and seriously undermine their faith. Accordingly, their oneirology and demonology were reciprocal. While their oneirology presented the problems of dreams, such as nightmares and nocturnal emission, their demonology proposed the solutions. Their oneirology set the stage for a demonological drama, in which they diabolised their rivals, especially the heretics who attached great significance to dreams. In this context of oneirological demonology, a patristic anti-dream propaganda was formulated chiefly against heretical sects.

In this chapter I argue that the nature of demon-inspired dreams in the writings of these five church fathers can be reckoned as a means of demonic assault, temptation and deception. I also demonstrate the methodological and hermeneutical

² See Job 7:14; 33:15-18; Sirach 40:5-7; Wisdom of Solomon 18:17-19. For discussion, see Appendix C of this thesis.

connections between dreams and demonology in their texts.³

1. Tertullian

According to Tertullian, dreams could be employed by demons as an instrument to attack and deceive humanity. In his dream typology, the first type was comprised of the dreams which were inflicted on us by demons.⁴ After his description of this type of dream and those of the second type (i.e. divinely-inspired dreams), Tertullian made a comparison between them in terms of their essence and intent. He wrote:

Surely, it was under the inspiration of God that Nebuchadnezzar had his famous dreams⁵ and the majority of mankind get their knowledge of God from dreams. Therefore, just as the mercy of God abounds for the pagans, so the temptations of the devil attack the saints; he never relaxes his malignant efforts, trying to trap them in their sleep, if unable to assault them when they are awake (*Sicut ergo dignatio dei et in ethnicos, ita et temptatio mali et in sanctos, a quibus nec interdum absistit, ut vel*

³ Some modern scholarly books or articles have deeply traced the development of demonology in early Christianity, such as Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (Cornell University Press, 1981); Fred Cornwallis Conybeare, *Christian Demonology*, in *JQR* 8:4, 9:1,3 and 4 (reprint by Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2007); Montague Summers, *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology* (London: Trubner, 1926) and D. Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), while others have explored demon-inspired dreams in patristic writings, such as Malcolm Godden, "Were it not that I Have Bad Dreams: Gregory the Great and the Anglo-Saxons on the Dangers of Dreaming" in *Rome and the North* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001); Guy Stroumsa, *Barbarian Philosophy: The Religious Revolution of Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999) and Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*. However, no scholar has ever probed into the relationship between patristic oneirology and demonology or their influence on each other. Brakke has discussed this issue in his article "The Problematicization of Nocturnal Emissions in Early Christian Syria, Egypt, and Gaul" (in *J ECS* Vol. 3, No. 4, 1995), but only very slightly.

⁴ *De Anima* 47.1 (ed. J.H. Waszink, 65). Right after Tertullian's discussion of demonic acts (in the last three paragraphs of *De Anima* 46), we find his dream taxonomy (*De Anima* 47). Waszink asserts, "The mention of the influence of demons on dreams induces Tertullian to discuss a classification of dreams according to their sources." Waszink, *Tertulliani*, 500. Hence, we can say that it was Tertullian's demonology which first introduced an explicit and systematic dream typology into the scene of Christian oneirology.

⁵ See Dan 2:1-30.

*dormientibus obrepat qua potest, si vigilantibus non potest).*⁶

Obviously, diabolical dreams were targeted at assailing humans whereas divinely-inspired dreams were intended to benefit them. In dreams, people might encounter a divine revelation as well as a demonic raid. Devout Christians could be impregnable in the day but often vulnerable at rest. Since the best time for the devil to prey on people, particularly the saints, was during their dreaming, dreams fittingly became the best weapon for demonic onslaught against them. Dreams facilitated Satan's aggression towards humanity.

Secondly, dreams could also be a medium for demonic deception. Tertullian recognised that demon-inspired dreams sometimes turned out true and favourable to us. Nevertheless, when they deliberately set out to delude us with favours, "they betray themselves as vain, deceitful, vague, licentious and impure." The only effect of their fallacious images was to harm their victims (dreamers) while seeming to help them.⁷ Supported by Aristotle's report that a demigod in Sardinia had the power of inhibiting dreams for those who slept in his shrine,⁸ Tertullian inferred that "it lies within the discretion of demons to take away as well as confer the power of dreams."⁹ Having such a capability for ruling dreams, the devil could easily mislead people into believing in his mighty power or in the wicked practice of dream incubation.

⁶ *De Anima* 47.2 (ed. Waszink, 65; trans. E.A. Quain, *FC* 10.285-6). Cf. *Apologeticum* 23.1 (CCL 1.130). Augustine, *De Trinitate* 4.11.14 (BA 15.374). Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job* 8.24.43 (CCL 143.414-5).

⁷ *De Anima* 46.12; 47.1 (ed. Waszink, 65; trans. Quain, 285). For demonic dreams which have often come true, see *Verba Seniorum* 10.2 (PL 73.912). For demons who seem to be helpers, cf. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 2.24 (BA 33.386-90).

⁸ Aristotle, *Physics* 218b (LCL 228.382). For the ancient practice of dream incubation, see Mary Hamilton, *Incubation, or the Cure of Disease in the Pagan Temples and Christian Churches* (London: Henderson and St Andrews Simpkin, 1906). For testimonies of this practice, see E. J. Edelstein and L. Edelstein, *Asclepius* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1945, reprint, 1998), 209-261.

⁹ *De Anima* 49.2 (ed. Waszink, 67; trans. Quain, 288).

One of Satan's remarkable deceits was to bring back the souls of the dead and exhibit them to view. This kind of apparition appeared mostly in dreams, often with recourse to the practice of dream incubation around tombs or by the trickery of sorcerers. In the Greco-Roman social and cultural milieu (in which the practice and the trickery were very common), many people credited the idea that "visions of the dead seen in dreams must be real."¹⁰ In other words, the image of a dead person in a dream was really that dead person's actual soul. However, Tertullian sharply rejected this idea. He argued that Hades was not in any case open for the escape of any soul. Any messenger or oneiric apparition who told us about matters in the netherworld actually came from Satan, rather than from Hell. Although God sometimes recalled men's souls to their bodies as proof of His power, He never "gives this power to the credulous magicians with their fallacious dreams and poetic fancies."¹¹

Despite severely deploring the practice as superstitious and the idea as fallacious, Tertullian still acknowledged and never belittled the devil's phenomenal power to deceive people through dreams, and the profound impact it had on human daily life. He recognised that Satan was devious in using dreams freely as a criminal accessory to his assault on humans and also as a scheming messenger to lead them astray from God and true faith.

¹⁰ Ibid. 57.10 (ed. Waszink, 78; trans. Quain, 305); 57.5-12 (ed. Waszink, 77-8). Also see *Apologeticum* 23.1 (CCL 1.130) in which Tertullian described that through the power of demons, sorcerers could make what seemed to be the souls of the dead appear or could send dreams into people's minds. Cf. *The Martyrdom of Pionius* 14.5-35 (ed. H. Musurillo, 154). Justin, *Apologia* 1.14 (ed. P. Parvis, 110-2). Augustine, *De Trinitate* 4.11.14 (BA 15.374). For examples of the dead appearing in the dreams of the living, see Homer, *Iliad* 23.62-160 (LCL 171.496-504; also mentioned by Tertullian in *De Anima* 56.2 [ed. Waszink, 74]); Herodotus, *Historiae* 4.172 (ed. H. Rosén, Vol. I, 442-3), which is mentioned in *De Anima* 57.10 (ed. Waszink, 78); Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 94-139 (LCL 146.280-4); Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.268-297 (LCL 63.334-6). Apuleius, *Metamorphoseon* 8.1-14 (LCL 453.58-84).

¹¹ *De Anima* 57.12 (ed. Waszink, 78; trans. Quain, 306); 57.6, 10-11 (ed. Waszink, 77-8). Tertullian quoted Luke 16:26 to support his argument. Cf. *Adversus Marcionem* 4.34 (CCL 1.634-9). Guy Stroumsa's opinion that according to Tertullian, dreams "permit communication of the soul with the dead" is contentious. Stroumsa, *Barbarian Philosophy*, 208.

Tertullian's descriptions of the devil and his malevolent acts frequently arise out of his discourse on dreams in *De Anima* (i.e. from chapter 43 to 57). Nonetheless, those descriptions were mainly aimed not at dissecting demon-inspired dreams or their adverse effects, but at promulgating his doctrinal thought concerning demons. His dream texts graphically illustrated Satan's aggressive ability and sly manipulation, by which every one, especially the saintly, was imperiled and tempted.

In Tertullian's dream texts, the power of evil spirits "is not confined to the precincts of their shrines, but it roams all over, it flies through the air, and all the while is free and unchecked." Nobody could doubt that "our homes lie open to such spirits, who beset humans with their [dream] images not only in our bedrooms but also in their temples [i.e. the temples of dream incubation]." In fact, "every man is attended by a demon (*nullum paene hominem carere daemonio*)."¹² Also, demonic spirits could dwell in or possess people, including eminent persons, deceiving them by a "counterfeit divine power". "Through their deceitful endeavours they grant men remedies, warnings or prophecies."¹³

Towards the end of his dream text *De Anima*, Tertullian concluded that "'Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light,' ...at last he will work marvelous things and show himself as God, so much so that, 'if possible, he will deceive even the elect'."¹⁴ In other words, evil spirits, exactly like the Holy Spirit, could abide in us and perform miracles for us. They could bestow prognostic or curative dreams which resembled those derived from the divine upon us. A wonder

¹² *De Anima* 57.4 (ed. Waszink, 76; trans. Quain, 304); also see 46.13 (ed. Waszink, 65). Cf. Horace, *Epistula* 2.2.187; Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 4.23.3 ("Every house also is full of them [the wicked demons],... Our bodies also are full of them." SC 262.226; trans. H. Gifford, [Tome III/1] 174c)

¹³ *De Anima* 46.12 (ed. Waszink, 65; trans. Quain, 284). Cf. *Scorpiace* 2.8 (CCL 2.1072-3); Deut 13:1-5. Also see Origen, *Homiliae in Exodum* 8.4 (SC 321.254-60).

¹⁴ *De Anima* 57.8 (ed. Waszink, 77; trans. Quain, 305); 2 Cor 11.14; 2 Thess 2:4; Matt 24:24.

which looked like divine work may in reality be a demonic one.

In this regard, discrimination between dreams from God and from Satan, or between a divine dream revelation and a demonic dream deception, was virtually impossible, since its criteria relied neither on the veridicality of dreams (for Satan also gave true dreams) nor on their utility (for Satan too sent helpful dreams) nor the enjoyment from experiencing them (for Satan also issued favourable dreams). Tertullian himself provided only a dream typology (i.e. how many types of dreams existed), but never gave any clear criterion or paradigm for distinguishing dreams (e.g. how to identify a dream as a certain type). Without doubt, his audience found no way to discern the origin of dreams and thus their credibility.¹⁵

We might expect that Tertullian, who was a zealous Montanist and stressed the importance of dreams, “oracles” and the like, ought to have proposed a more practical oneirology.¹⁶ Strikingly, Tertullian’s dream theory assisted people little in identifying, appreciating or interpreting their dreams. Rather, it simply confused them. It apparently breached oneirological taboos and rejected oneirological demand. However, this was exactly Tertullian’s propagational methodology for his doctrinalised oneirology, in which dogmatics took priority. In this case, his oneirology was chiefly devoted to explaining his demonology, rather than to making itself reasonable, constructive or applicatory.

What Tertullian attempted to convey with regard to demon-inspired dreams was mostly concerned with Satan and his work, as well as about how to avert his aggression. The devil exercised a counterfeit divine power and performed miracles

¹⁵ The issue concerning who has ability or authority to discern dreams will be discussed in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

¹⁶ For Tertullian’s adherence to, or amplification of, Montanism when he composed his dream theory, see *De Anima*, 9.3-8 (ed. Waszink, 11-2), for example. Also see Timothy Barnes, *Tertullian*, 38-48.

and wonders particularly by dreams, just as God did. The majority of dreams may emanate from demons.¹⁷ Hence, Tertullian advised that people should consider every dream potentially as the devil's deceit if it is beneficial or supernatural, or as his attack if detrimental. Better an overcorrecting mind than a credulous one, a misjudgment on a dream than a wrong faith in it, and to wrongfully convict a hundred innocent than to acquit an evil. In this way, we are able to resist diabolically oneiric impostures. We may therefore lose certain benefits from our dreams, so does the devil from us.

Explicitly, Tertullian's discourse on demonic dreams strongly reflects the doctrine of demons. His interpretation of these dreams actually makes more sense in the context of his demonology, rather than in the context of his oneirology. Through this interpretation, he aggrandised diabolical power, and so too his demonology. In Tertullian's dream texts, the devil never appears as the weak, the powerless or the one whose power is restricted by God. Rather, in these texts (and in dreams), the devil seems to be stronger than in his other texts (and in other places), even to the extent of being omnipresent. The devil, exactly like the divine, had the capability of manipulating dreams for his own ends, including miraculously healing and truly prophesying.

In his other texts (and in other places), Tertullian often highlighted God's almightiness which entirely overcomes the power of Satan, who remains vastly inferior to the divine.¹⁸ But why in his oneirology did he permit or even empower Satan to have such a (counterfeit divine) power, which could perform great miracles and wonders, comparable to those performed by God? The main reason is that this

¹⁷ *De Anima*, 47.1 (ed. Waszink, 65). Stroumsa, *Barbarian Philosophy*, 217; Le Goff, *L'imaginaire Médiéval*, 288.

¹⁸ For example, see *Apologeticum* 22.1-24.10 (CCL 1.128-135).

kind of illustration of Satan's power could facilitate his teaching about demons. The greater this power, the more demanded and intensified was the teaching. Tertullian's oneirology patently profited demons, but it methodologically availed him in spreading his demonology.

On the other hand, within Tertullian's demonology, dreams were diabolically doctrinalised and could be freely exploited by the devil. In turn, his dream taxonomy was diversified and his oneirology (including his interpretations of dreams) hermeneutically magnified. His teaching about dreams might thus have become more enchanting and requisite in the early Christian community.

This is the methodological and hermeneutical relationship between dreams and demons in Tertullian's texts. His oneirology served his demonology while the latter varied the former. For the propagation of the latter, Tertullian recklessly ignored the fact that the former seriously jeopardised people's discernment and assessment of dreams. In effect, his interpretation of dreams enriched his demonology more than his oneirology. For the propagation of the former, a theory of demon-inspired dreams and an oneirological demonology was constructed, probably for the first time in Christian history, by his method of demonologically doctrinalising dreams.

2. Lactantius

Like Tertullian, Lactantius also conceived of dreams as a vehicle for demonic assaillment and ruse. In his dream discourse, Lactantius remarked that the demons who disguise themselves as pagan gods can "insinuate themselves into people's bodies and secretly work in their inward parts, wrecking their health, causing diseases, and terrifying their souls with dreams." By so doing, they compelled people

to have recourse to their aid.¹⁹

Apart from attacking humanity through dreams, demons had, by the same means, made frequent demonstrations of their power for the purpose of cheating people. For example, Augustus Caesar was afflicted with a severe disease during the civil war with Brutus, and determined to abstain from battle. The image of Minerva (the Roman goddess of poetry, medicine and magic) appeared in a dream of his doctor Artorius, “advising him that Caesar should not stay in the camp on account of his infirmity. He was therefore carried on a litter to the fight.” Afterwards, the camp was taken by Brutus on the same day.²⁰

The Romans believed that it was their divinity through this dream that caused Augustus Caesar to be saved from being captured. However, Lactantius pointed out that this dream, as well as all other dreams claimed to be sent by gods, were in verity generated by demons and were deceptive in character. The fraudulent nature of all these dream tricks remained obscure to those who lacked the truth. Through dreams bogus deities seduced the Romans far from the true God.²¹

Moreover, Lactantius’ discourse on dreams did not merely divulge diabolically aggressive and delusive stratagems, but deliberately diffused his doctrine

¹⁹ *Divinarum Institutionum* 2.14.14 (SC 337.190; trans. W. Fletcher, *ANF* 7.64). A similar description was also given by Minucius Felix in his *Octavius* 27.1-8 (ed. B. Kytzler, 26-7). Also see Tatian, *Oratio Adversus Graecos* 18 (ed. M. Whittaker, 36); (Pseudo-) Clement of Rome, *Homiliae* 9.14 (GCS 42.137); (Pseudo-) Cyprian, *Quod Idola Dii non Sint* 7 (CSEL 3/1.24-5); Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses Mystagogicae* 1.8 (SC 126.94-8; NPNF 7 column 19.8).

²⁰ *Divinarum* 2.7.22 (SC 337.104; trans. Fletcher, 52). Cf. Tertullian, *De Anima* 46.8 (ed. Waszink, 64); Velleius Paterculus, *Roman History* 2.70.1 (LCL 152.200); Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium* 1.7.1-2 (LCL 492.80-2: in Maximus’ report, Artorius warns Caesar not to let his sickness keep him from being present at the battle and from performing his duties as commander. Caesar then gave orders that he should be carried to the battle). In this chapter Lactantius also provided another example of a miraculous dream sent by Jupiter. This dream account was also mentioned by Minucius Felix (*Octavius* 7.1-3; 27.1-6 [ed. Kytzler, 5-6; 26]) and Augustine (*De Civitate Dei* 4.26 [BA 33.610-2]).

²¹ *Divinarum* 2.8.1 (SC 337.104) and 2.15.1 (SC 337.190). Cf. (Pseudo-) Clement of Rome, *Recognitiones*, 4.19; 4.21 (GCS 51.155-6; 51.156-7); Jerome, *Vita Sancti Hilarionis* 21 (the demon used to delude people at Memphis with dreams. PL 23.38-9); Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 9.18 (BA 34.400-2); Theodoret of Cyrrhus. *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.10 (SC 530.218-20).

of demons. Accordingly, oneirology and demonology were well integrated by Lactantius. For instance, in chapter XXVII of his *Epitome Divinarum Institutionum*, Lactantius proposed that pagan gods generally exhibited their majesty through auguries, oracles and dreams in order to snare people into becoming their believers. Immediately, in the next chapter (XXVIII), he disclosed the true identity of these gods, asserting that they were actually demons, the ministers of the devil (*diaboli satellites*) and the authors of evils (*auctores malorum*).²²

Demons could attach themselves to individual people, including the most educated, such as Hesiod and Socrates. Being slight spirits, they entered secretly into men's bodies, in which they excited diseases, and could only be expelled if the sick (their victims) duly offered sacrifices in the temples of pagan deities. "They send either dreams which are full of terror in order that they may be invoked, or dreams which come true in order that they may be venerated the more (*somnia inmittunt, aut plane terrores, ut ipsi rogentur, aut quorum exitus respondeant ueritati, ut uenerationem sui augeant*)."²³ In other words, demons were dispellers of those evils which they themselves caused and imposed. So persuasive were their wily miracles that men believed them to be gods. It was these demons who first introduced novel superstitions and fallacious practices, including astrology, augury and divination.²⁴

²² Cf. *Divinarum* 2.14-6 (SC 337.184-204).

²³ *Epitome Divinarum Institutionum* 28 (SC 335.110; trans. E.H. Blakeney, 77).

²⁴ Ibid. 27-8 (SC 335.104-110). Also see *Divinarum* 2.14-6 (SC 337.184-204). Cf. 1 Cor 1:20; Hesiod, *Works and Days* 122-6 (LCL 57.96); Plato, *Apology* 31 (LCL 36.112-4); Cicero, *De Divinatione* 1.54.99-100 (LCL 154.328-330); Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.21.143 (SC 30.148-50); Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 22-5 (CCL 1.128-38); (Pseudo-) Cyprian, *Quod Idola* 6 ("Socrates declared that he was instructed and ruled at the will of a demon." CSEL 3/1.23-4; trans. E. Wallis, ANF 5.467). For an opposite view of divination vis-à-vis the views of most church fathers, see Synesius of Cyrene, *De Insomniis* 1 ("Now divination must be the greatest of all good things, for it is in knowledge, in a word, in the cognitional part of his faculties that God differs from man, as does man from the brute." "We, therefore, have set ourselves to speak of divination through dreams, that men should not despise it, but rather cultivate it,..." PG 66.1281-4; trans. A. Fitzgerald, 326) and 7 (PG 66.1300-1). Le Goff reckons that Synesius was still a pagan when he wrote *De Insomniis*. Le Goff, *L'imaginaire Médiéval*, 278. Cf. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum* 11.3.4 ("Some portents seem

More importantly, within these two chapters in which dreams were discussed, Lactantius traced the fall of angels and the genesis of demons. Before their fall, they were angels assigned by God to improve men's lives, and were enjoined to hold aloof from earthly things, lest, being spotted with sin, they should be deprived of their angelic honor. But the crafty devil, while they sojourned among men, enticed them to defile themselves with women. Then, "cast out by God on account of their sins, they lost both the name and substance of angels, and converted to the devil's satellites, betaking themselves to the ruining of men, for whose protection they had come."²⁵ They assumed for themselves the name of "Genii" (*Geniorum*).²⁶

Likewise, after providing more details concerning dreams as a diabolical instrument in the dream text (Book II, chapter VII) of his *Divinarum Institutionum*, Lactantius stated that he would now expose all the deceptions by prodigies, dreams or oracles in pagan religion so that his readers may understand "what is the source and origin of these evils."²⁷ He then commenced to trace the fall of Satan, the ruler of demons.

In the beginning, God produced a spirit like himself, who was endowed with the perfections of God the Father, in order that His goodness should spring and flow forth afar like a stream. Later, by this spirit God made another, who was liable to corruption and in whom the disposition of the divine origin did not remain, to be his servant. This fallible spirit was soon poisoned by its own envy and changed from

to have been created as indications of future events, for God sometimes wants to indicate what is to come through some defects in newborns, and also dreams and oracles,..." *PL* 82.419; trans. by S.A. Barney etc., 244).

²⁵ *Epitome* 27 (*SC* 335.108; trans. Blakeney, 76)

²⁶ *Ibid.* 28 (*SC* 335.108). Also see *Divinarum* 2.14 (*SC* 337.184-90). Cf. Gen 6:1-4. *I Enoch* 6-11. Justin, *Apologia* 2.5 (ed. P. Parvis, 284-8); Tertullian, *Ad Nationes* 2.13 (*CCL* 1.64-8) and *Apologeticum* 32.2 (*CCL* 1.143). Note that in the texts of both Justin and Tertullian, demons are not the fallen angels themselves but their children. Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 26.8-9 (ed. Kytzler, 25), in which Socrates' demon is also mentioned.

²⁷ *Divinarum*, 2.8.2 (*SC* 337.104). Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* 11.360-1 (*LCL* 64.260).

good to evil through its own choice. It enticed angels as well as the first man to disobey God's commands. It then endeavoured to corrupt and destroy all humans with its own servants, the fallen angels or demons. Because this evil spirit prosecuted people before God for their faults which he himself enticed them to commit, it is called "διάβολον" by the Greek and "*criminatorum*" by Christians.²⁸

Despite the very aggressive power exercised by Satan and demons, Lactantius maintained that Christians had nothing to fear from demons. Following his description of demonic assault through dreams, Lactantius declared that Satan and demons "certainly do harm, but only to people who fear them, who are unprotected by the sublime and powerful hand of God and who are uninitiated in the mystery of truth." They were even frightened of Christians, the worshippers of God. It was a great sin to submit oneself to their power when you could surpass them and drive them out by using God's name against them.²⁹ Hence, with Christian truth people could look through demonic dream hoaxes, and through the Christian God they would never suffer demonic dream attacks. Here, Lactantius' oneirology enunciated his demonology, with the ultimate intention of reinforcing Christian faith.

Another outstanding example of Lactantius' oneirological demonology can be found in his dream narrative of the siege of Rome. According to both the Roman writer Ovid and Lactantius, when Rome was besieged by the Gauls, Jupiter the Baker commanded the Romans in a dream to dupe their enemy by means of making all their corn into bread and throwing it into the enemy's camp. This done, the Gauls, in

²⁸ *Divinarum*, 2.8.3-5; 2.12.17; 2.14.1-5 (*SC* 337.106-8; 337.176; 337.184-6). Also see *Epitome* 27 (*SC* 335.104-8). Both the Greek and Latin words here denote "slanderer (or accuser)." Cf. 1 Chr 21.1; Matt 4.1; Plato, *Apology* 19b (*LCL* 36.74); Aristotle, *Topics* 126a32 (*LCL* 391.462); Plautus, *Bacchides* 827 (*LCL* 60.452); Tacitus, *Annales* 4.12 (*LCL* 312.24).

²⁹ *Divinarum* 2.15.1-3; 2.17.11 (*SC* 337.190-2; 337.208; trans. A. Bowen and P. Garnsey, 161). Cf. Acts 16:18, 19:13-6; Justin, *Apologia* 2.6; 2.8 (ed. Parvis, 290-6; 298-302); Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 23.15 (*CCL* 1.132-3); Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 27.7-8 (ed. Kytzler, 26-7).

despair at bringing the Romans down by starvation, abandoned the siege. In appreciation of Jupiter's advice, the Romans built an altar for him.³⁰

This dream was described by Ovid as a divine instruction to deliver the Romans from evil, whereas it was interpreted by Lactantius as a diabolic deception to seduce them into trusting evil pagan deities. Yet, the well-known Roman historian Livy mentioned neither Jupiter nor this dream in his account of the event, attributing the driving away of the Gauls to Marcus Furius Camillus alone.³¹ It seems that in order to promote Jupiter (the tutelary god of the Capitol), Ovid sacralised a dream or merely invented a dream account ascribed to Jupiter, while in order to promote his demonology, Lactantius doctrinally diabolised that same dream.

For Lactantius, dreams could be viewed as a tool used by demons to assault and deceive humans. Through their dream tricks, demons were falsely regarded as gods and pagan religion was widely credited. All this falsity could be unraveled only by Christians who held the truth which could unmask the deceptive essence of demonic dreams. Clearly, Lactantius' dream texts represented his demonology. By expounding the dreams engendered by demons, Lactantius tracked the deviation of both Satan and the fallen angels from God's servanthood. Since paganism was deeply rooted in demonic dream works, he hermeneutically deconstructed it through his oneirological demonology.

Indeed, Lactantius consistently interpreted a number of dream accounts in Greco-Roman literature out of context, and disregarded Greco-Roman oneirology, mythology or religious tradition. He simply interpreted those dreams within his

³⁰ *Epitome* 20 (SC 335.84-6) and *Divinarum* 1.20.33 (SC 326.204); Ovid, *Fasti* 6.349-394 (ed. R. Schilling, 84-6).

³¹ Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 5.45-9 (LCL 172.150-66). See N. Hooke, *The Roman History*, Vol.2 (London: printed for C.J.G. and F. Rivington, 1830), 112, note 1.

doctrinal framework and completely demonised them. It was through this kind of methodology that a demonology, which contained the etymology, the corrupt history and the acts of Satan and the wicked angels, was developed through the course of his dream texts.

3. Evagrius

Evagrius also considered dreams as a potent demonic weapon in the fight against humanity. He remarked, “An angelic dream gladdens the heart; a demonic dream agitates it (Ἐνύπνιον ἀγγελικὸν εὐφραίνει καρδίαν, ἐνύπνιον δὲ δαιμονιώδεις ἐκταράσσει αὐτήν).”³² The demon “attacks sleeping souls with a multitude of temptations and deeply troubles the soul.”³³ A monk who was imperturbable in the daytime may be susceptible to demonic assault in his sleep. The demon therefore endeavoured to dislodge his soul with terrifying, erotic or deceptive dreams.

First of all, demons could debilitate anchorites’ faith through nightmares. In dreams anchorites might find themselves encircled by wild beasts, entwined by serpents and cast down from high mountains. “It sometimes happens that even after awakening they are again surrounded by the same wild beasts or see their cell all afire and filled with smoke.”³⁴ That is, in their waking state they continued to see the appalling oneiric illusions which they had seen in dreams; or perhaps, demons made horrendous experiences in anchorites’ dreams really happen in their waking lives (i.e. they experience a fire accident first in a dream and then in reality). As a result, anchorites might be greatly demoralised. For Evagrius, anchorites’ nightmares

³² *Monks* 52 (ed. and trans. J. Driscoll, 54). Cf. *Praktikos* 24 (SC 171.556).

³³ *Scholia on Ecclesiastes* 35 (SC 397.116; trans. A.M. Casiday, 140).

³⁴ *De Diversis Malignis Cogitationibus* 27 (SC 438.248; trans. R. Sinkewicz, 172). Cf. Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 9 (SC 400.158-62).

originated simply with demons. Either their mental illusions of fire, or real fire accidents in their dwelling place, should also be attributed to demons.

If nightmares did not make anchorites fall into cowardice, demons then perturbed their souls through erotic dreams. The demon of lust sometimes offered an anchorite licentious dreams of intertwining with young girls. If he inclined towards pleasure in the sexual scenes or activities of these dreams, the demon could make use of his weakness for warfare.³⁵ Demons could also “transform into women who conduct themselves with wanton indecency and wish to play shameful games.” They conceived of all these seductive things, “wanting to trouble the concupiscible part (ἐπιθυμία)” of anchorites’ souls. When this part has been previously agitated in dreams, it readily welcomes thoughts of fornication on the morrow.³⁶ By so doing, demons weakened and tainted anchorites’ souls.

When demons had not been able to stir up an anchorite’s soul through terrifying or lustful dreams, they would send him dreams of vainglory in order to deceive him. These dreams were of this kind:

One often sees oneself rebuking demons, healing certain bodily infirmities or wearing the shepherd’s cloak and pasturing a flock. Upon waking, he immediately gets a fantasy of the priesthood and then spends the entire day thinking about the concerns of the priesthood, or as if the charism of healings were about to be granted, he foresees the miracles that will be performed and imagines the people who will be healed, the honours coming from brothers, and the gifts brought by outsiders, and many people from Egypt and abroad who are driven to him by his

³⁵ *Eulogios* 12 (PG 79.1108D). Cf. John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Acta Apostolorum* 31.3 (PG 60.231).

³⁶ *Cogitationibus* 27 (SC 438.248; trans. Sinkewicz, 172). Cf. Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 23 (the evil spirits “taking the form of women.” SC 400.198); Homer, *Odyssey* 4.795-841; 6.20-56 (LCL 104.176-80; 104.220-4), narrating that goddess Athena took the form of the daughter of Icarius in a dream and also took the form of the daughter of Dymas in another dream.

reputation.³⁷

For Evagrius, vainglory was the sharpest weapon of demons, shooting down ascetic labours. It insinuated itself into an anchorite's soul and opened the soul's gate to all demons, like some evil traitor of a city.³⁸ By sending dreams of vainglory to anchorites, demons mislead them into temptations, and vainglory make inroads in their lives.

In Evagrius' theory, dreams were diabolical arms to intimidate, tempt or deceive people, especially monks. In order to seduce a monk, the demon could even have sexual activity with the monk in his dream. It is in Evagrius' dream text that we behold sexual intercourse between a demon and a human, probably the most astonishing sexual scene, appearing perhaps for the first time in Christian sexual history.

Furthermore, it is noticeable that Evagrius' views of dreams were germinated chiefly for articulating his doctrine of demons. Very few of his dream discussions can be found outside his demonological texts. His longest and most coherent discourse on dreams appears in his treatise *De Diversis Malignis Cogitationibus*, a large part of which is devoted to the exposition of demons' classes, tactics and weapons (such as dreams) as well as the methods for discerning their works and combating them. To Evagrius, because demons could undermine the ascetic lives of monks through dreams, "it is necessary to investigate how demons leave an impress and a form on our ruling faculty in the fantasies that occurs during sleep" as well as to know how to

³⁷ *Cogitationibus* 28 (SC 438.252; trans. Sinkewicz, 173 and Casiday, 108-9). Cf. *Eulogios* 34 (PG 79.1137D-1140A); *Praktikos* 13 (SC 171.528-30). Cf. Cassian, *De Institutis* 11.14-15 (SC 109.440-2); Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca*. 58.5 (PTS 51.671 [column 58.9]).

³⁸ *Cogitationibus* 14 (SC 438.200); *Eulogios* 14 (PG 79.1112A-C); *Praktikos* 13 (SC 171.528-30).

fight against them.³⁹

In Evagrius' oneirology, demons produced dreams out of the dreamer's memory, the content of which was derived from the things he saw, heard or thought during waking hours. If the content of a monk's memory was pure, demons would find difficulty in provoking evil dreams from him.⁴⁰ Besides, demons manipulated a monk's dreams (or dream images) only when his organ of perception rested in sleep and was fully inactive. Therefore, his observance of vigil could successfully ward off diabolic dreams. He could resist diabolical oneiric invasion through careful examination of his thoughts, through the contemplation of divine teachings and by taking refuge upon "the rock of knowledge (γνώσεως πέτραν)."⁴¹ Yet, those who were spiritually weak or did not have the knowledge of discernment would be plagued with demonic dreams.⁴²

Evagrius believed that it was from the passions of irascibility and concupiscence that arose almost all the demonic thoughts that cast the mind into ruin and destruction, as well inducing monks to commit violence and adultery.⁴³ Thus demons attempted to provoke these two passions through dreams. Those who were

³⁹ *Cogitationibus* 4 (SC 438.162; trans. Sinkewicz, 155).

⁴⁰ Demons sometimes also used external things to fabricate dreams, such as with the sound of waves for sailors. *Cogitationibus* 4 (SC 438.164). Cf. *Kephalaia Gnostika* 4.47 (PO 28.156-7); *Scholia on Ecclesiastes* 34-5 (SC 397.114-20); Aristotle, *De Insomniis* 460b28-462a31 (ed. D. Gallop, 96-102). Ephraem Syrus in his *Carmina Nisibena* 35.10 (CSCO 240.4; NPNF 13.194) stated that Christ, because of His purity, is the only one whom the devil cannot disturb even by dreams.

⁴¹ *Cogitationibus* 3-4; 17; 19 (SC 438.156-64; [the Greek quotation from] 212; 216-22). Evagrius' gnostic (or Origenistic) views frequently appear in his dream text. Readers can easily notice gnostic phrases, such as "the knowledge of God," "the knowledge of Christ," "the knowledge of numerous things," "the knowledge of discernment," "spiritual knowledge," "the rock of knowledge," and "renewing ourselves in knowledge," and "the contemplation of these things [divine teachings]." *Cogitationibus* 15-17, 19, 22, 26, 29, 41 (SC 438.202-14; 216-22; 254-6; 290-6).

⁴² For a thorough study of Evagrius' view of the relation between dreams and spirituality, see François Refoulé, "Rêves et vie spirituelle d'après Évagre le Pontique," *Supplément de la Vie Spirituelle* 59 (1961): 470-516.

⁴³ *Cogitationibus* 2-3 (SC 438.154-62). In his *Reflections* (Supplementary chapter 2; trans. Sinkewicz, 216) Evagrius offers a similar definition: "A demonic thought is a mental representation of a sensible object, which moves the irascible and the concupiscible part in a manner contrary to nature." Cf. Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 21 (SC 400.192-4).

inclined to anger were more apt to fall victim to frightening dreams,⁴⁴ and those who had consumed too much food and water fell prey to salacious dreams. In order to eschew having such dreams, the former had to appease the irascible part of their souls with patience, gentleness, psalms and almsgiving while the latter had to exhaust the concupiscible part with fasting, sleeping on the ground and prayer that they might not enter into temptation. Beneficence and mercy together were particularly effective against such dreams. By doing so, monks could withstand demonic attacks and machinations.⁴⁵

According to Evagrius' oneirological demonology, demons could even play the role of oneirocritic, interpreting the dreams which they dispatched for the dreamers. In his analysis of vainglory dreams, Evagrius illustrated a situation whereby a demon sent a monk a dream in which he saw himself shepherding a flock. After waking from his sleep, the demon explained the monk's dream to him, saying: "You will be a priest and behold those who are seeking you are following quickly behind you."⁴⁶ After hearing this dream interpretation, the monk might assume that he would soon attain the priesthood and become a renowned spiritual leader in the Christian community. In this way the demon deceives him into yielding to the temptation of vainglory, by which demons regain their entrance into his soul and ruin his mind. Hence, monks must pay no attention to these kinds of dreams and interpretations, but expose them with a vigilant thought so as to resist the

⁴⁴ *Cogitationibus* 27 (SC 438.248-50); *Praktikos* 11; 21 (SC 171.516-8; 550). Cf. Plato, *Republic* 9.572 (LCL 276.338-40).

⁴⁵ *Cogitationibus* 3; 27 (SC 438.156-62; 248-50). Here Evagrius cites the full passage of Prov 3:24-28 to support his view. Cf. *De Octo Spiritibus Malitiae* 1 and 10 (PG 79.1145 and 1156; Sinkewicz's column 1.11-2 and 4.20); *Praktikos* 17; 20; 71 (SC 171.542; 548; 658); *Monks* 102 (ed. J. Driscoll, 63); *Scholia on Proverbs* 36 (or Prov 3:24-5 [SC 340.130]); *Rerum Monachalium Rationes* 11 (PG 40.1264); Cassian, *Collationes* 22.3.1-3 (SC 64.116-8).

⁴⁶ *Antirrhetikos* 7.26 (ed. Frankenberg, 534; trans. Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus*, p.271, note 39; French translation, see SC 438, p.252, note 3).

temptation.⁴⁷

In the Bible it is only God who is able to issue dreams and interpret them for their recipients.⁴⁸ Astonishingly, in Evagrius' writings, demons were also capable of this feat, and furthermore, there is no mention of God ever having done so. In fact, this was most likely the first time in Church history that demons were empowered to interpret dreams for Christians. It is impossible to identify this idea of Evagrius' as a Christian notion from either a biblical perspective or from the perspective of the patristic oneirology which preceded him. Clearly, Evagrius had no interest in formulating an oneirology which remained in accordance with either the biblical or the earlier patristic dream tradition. Rather, he strived absolutely to form a dream theory which reinforced his doctrine of demons. In the process of arguing or proclaiming doctrinal issues, certain biblical or traditional Christian convictions had to be suspended.

Nevertheless, Evagrius' oneirology was far removed from its pagan counterpart, as Greco-Roman dream theorists probably never invented this kind of idea (i.e. that evil spirits gave dreams to a man and then interpreted them for him). It was still related to Christian beliefs as it was nurtured by Christian doctrines, particularly the doctrine of demons.

Hermeneutically, Evagrius' oneirology and demonology were inseparably connected with each other. Through his oneirology he expounded demonic strategies and means of aggression against monks, while through his demonology he provided corresponding solutions. By exploring the phenomena of dreams, he disclosed the acts of demons. Through analysing the demon's role as a dream-transmitter and an

⁴⁷ *Cogitationibus* 14; 28 (SC 438.198-202; 252-4).

⁴⁸ Gen 41:1-36; Dan 2:1-45.

oneirocritic, he painstakingly reclaimed the old land of Christian demonology. For the sake of his demonology, his oneirology crossed the boundary of traditional Christian oneirological conviction. On the other hand, through his oneirology, new horizons of demonology were opened up for the church fathers, as well as lay Christians, who followed.

4. Augustine

Augustine observed that certain dreams were produced by demons who acted with faculties that had a penetrating natural effect and who possessed a far greater ability to arouse whatever they wished in humans.⁴⁹ Their dreams attempted primarily to frighten the dreamers into obeying them or to bluff them into glorifying false gods.

In his *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine pointed out that demons in a thousand forms fill mankind with dread. Even sleep, which receives the name of repose, “is often made restless by dreadful dreams and nightmares so filled with unspeakable phantoms that seem so real that our whole being is filled with fear.”⁵⁰ He also related a dream account: A doctor in Carthage was afflicted by gout and was enrolled to be baptised. During the night before his baptism, a number of demons appeared to him in a dream and forbade him from being baptised that year. When he refused to comply with their demand, they trampled on his gouty foot, causing him the most excruciating pain he had ever experienced.⁵¹

In addition, Augustine proclaimed that by means of visions or dreams, “good

⁴⁹ Augustine, *Epistula* 9 (CCL 31.21-3).

⁵⁰ *De Civitate Dei* 22.22.3 (BA 37.650; trans. G.G. Walsh and D.J. Honan, FC 24.477-8). Cf. (Pseudo-) Ignatius, *Epistle to Philipppians* 4 (PG 5.924-5); Isidore, *Sententiae* 3.6 (CCL 111.215-20).

⁵¹ *De Civitate* 22.8.5 (BA 37.570).

spirits instruct men and evils spirit deceive them.”⁵² Citing the opinion of neo-Platonist Porphyry, which was expressed in a letter to Anebo the Egyptian, Augustine asserted that demons were deceitful and malicious spirits who “come into the soul of men and delude their senses both in their sleep and waking.”⁵³ Again in *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine illustrated that demons could use dream trickery in order to beguile people. He affirmed that demons could not create substances, and thus exploded the stories of Greco-Roman literature which narrated that demons could change a man’s body into the body of any beast.⁵⁴ However, he admitted that they could change the appearance of the creatures of God. When a man’s physical senses were dulled by sleep or artificially suppressed, demons could make “the man’s phantasm (*phantasticum hominis*) — which in dreams assumes various forms and with wondrous swiftness takes on shapes like corporeal semblance— be presented inexplicably in a bodily form to the senses of others.” While the man’s actual body lay asleep in one place, his phantom appeared to the external apprehension of another person as being embodied in the likeness of some animal.⁵⁵

Augustine gave two examples of demonic dream trickery which he had heard

⁵² *De Genesi ad Litteram* 12.14.29 (BA 49.374; trans. J.H. Taylor, ACW 42.197). Good spirits indicate the spirits of God’s angels.

⁵³ *De Civitate* 10.11 (BA 34.464). Cf. *De Divinatione Daemonum* 5.9 (BA 10.670-2); Porphyry, *Epistle to Anebo* 28 (Parthey’s edition); Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 5.7 (SC 262.282-8).

⁵⁴ The stories which Augustine criticised here include those in Virgil, *Eclogues* 8.70 (LCL 63.78) and in Apuleius, *Metamorphoseon* 3.1-29; 11.1-30 (LCL 44.126-80; 453.290-358).

⁵⁵ *De Civitate* 18.18 (BA 36.536). Cf. Justin, *Apologia* 1.14 (ed. P. Parvis, 110), which described demons deceive by “appearance in dreams.” Augustine did not explain what a living man’s “phantasm” really was at all. However, his assertion that “a man has a phantasm” should indicate that it was still a part of a man. If so, what could it be except the spirit or soul? Cf. *Epistula* 6 (CCL 31.13-4); *De Cura pro Mortuis Gerenda* 11.13 (BA 2.494-6); Plato, *Sophist* 266 (LCL 123.448-52). For discussion, see Dulaey, *Le Rêve dans la vie et la pensée de saint Augustin*, 93-7 and 83, note 63. The dreamer’s soul which leaves the body becomes visible by means of a human form, see Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.32 (SC 136.74-6). The idea that a man’s soul may depart from his body while the man is dreaming or sleeping was refuted by both Tertullian (*De Anima* 44.1-2 [ed. Waszink, 61]) and Gregory of Nyssa (*De Hominis Opificio* 14.2, 27.2, 29.1-11 [ed. G.H. Forbes, 190; 268-70; 282-90]). Bremmer identifies the visible soul outside the body as “the free soul (*psychē*),” in contrast to “the body soul (*thymos, noos* or *menos*)” in the context of Greek philosophy. Jan Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983, reprint, 1993), 31-32. Cf. Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 7.52.174 (LCL 352.622). Lucian, *Muscae Encomium* 7-10 (LCL 14.88-90).

“from men whom we cannot believe to be liars” and which he regarded as genuine incidents. The first example⁵⁶ recounted a case that the father of Praeantius ate some poisoned cheese in his own home and lay in bed as if sleeping, yet could not by any means be aroused. After a few days, “the father woke up as if he had been asleep and related what had happened to him as if they had been dreams.” He said that he had been made a sumpter horse and, along with other horses, had carried the Rhetian military provisions, so called because they were sent to Rhetia. “All this was found to have taken place just as he told, but it seemed to him to be his own dream.”⁵⁷

With respect to the phenomenon of men being changed, which had been written in ancient literature, Augustine concluded that if it happened at all, it happened in the fashion he had just stated. Demons, “with God’s righteous permission,” would experience no difficulty in performing juggleries of this kind. Through this manner of dream ruse, demons persuaded men into worshipping false gods.⁵⁸

Augustine’s oneirology was one of the keys to his thoughts on demons and their relation to God’s salvation scheme. Several of his discussions concerning dreams and (both good and evil) spirits were closely intertwined. For instance, in the dream text of his *De Genesi ad Litteram* (particularly Book XII, Chapter 2-21), all his analyses of dream phenomena were applied to support his doctrinal argument about spiritual visions emanating from the divine and the devil. By examining these analyses, we can further grasp his demonology.

In this dream text, Augustine depicted that when people were possessed by a

⁵⁶ The other example narrates a philosopher and his dream.

⁵⁷ *De Civitate* 18.18 (BA 36.538; trans. R.W. Dyson, 844). Cf. *De Cura pro Mortuis Gerenda* 12.15 (BA 2.496-502).

⁵⁸ *De Civitate* 18.18 (BA 36.540-2). Cf. *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 15.9 (CSEL 25.435-6).

spirit, either good or evil, they might see images in ocular visions during their waking state or in dreams during sleep. As a good spirit seized a man's spirit, it directed him to an extraordinary vision or dream which imparted true understandings or a reliable account of mysteries. On the other hand, a devil could unite his evil spirit with the spirit of a man in sleep. The evil spirit could sometimes cunningly act in a peaceful manner, possessing the dreamer's spirit without tormenting his body. In this spiritual union, the evil spirit may even speak of truth and disclose useful knowledge of the future to the dreamer.⁵⁹

Like Tertullian, Augustine recognised that demons could reveal truths and things to come through dreams.⁶⁰ He therefore stated that the discernment between the visions and dreams from a good spirit and those from an evil one "is certainly a most difficult task." Yet unlike Tertullian, Augustine saw a possibility of accomplishing the task: the one who had the gift of distinguishing the spirits could correctly judge whether a spirit was evil, and thus discern from which spirit a dream came.⁶¹

In Augustine's oneirology, demons appear to be threatening and pernicious to Christians; however, his demonology took the opposite view. Indeed, the union of the evil spirit with the dreamer's spirit could severely damage the dreamer's body, mind and soul. It was also true that most Christians did not have the gift of discernment

⁵⁹ *De Genesi* 12.13.27-28; 12.19.41 (BA 49.370-4; 49.394-8). Cf. *Enchiridion ad Laurentium* 59 (BA 9.206-6). For the spiritual union in which truth is revealed, cf. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 3.5-6; 3.22 (ed. E. C. Clarke, 130-2; 172-6).

⁶⁰ *De Genesi* 12.13.28 (BA 49.374). Tertullian, *De Anima* 46.12; 47.1 (ed. Waszink, 65). This does not indicate that demons could foresee things like God. In *De Civitate* 9.22 (BA 34.408; trans. G.G. Walsh and G. Momahan, FC 14.110) Augustine explained that demons could foretell things to come "only because, by longer experience, they have to decipher signals,... Often enough, their predictions are merely pre-announcements of what they are planning to do." And they are often wholly mistaken. In *De Divinatione Daemonum* 3.7-5.9 (BA 10.662-72) he explained the same idea in more detail. Cf. *Genesis* 12.17.34-5 (BA 49.384-6).

⁶¹ *De Genesi* 12.13.28 (BA 49.374; trans. Taylor, 196). Augustine here quoted 1 Cor 12:10.

and thus might be easily deceived by demonic dreams. Nonetheless, Christians could suffer no harm either in demonic dreams or in the diabolically spiritual union in their dreams, “so long as we do not deviate from the true faith (*si non erratur in ueritate fidei*).”⁶² Unlike Evagrius, Augustine did not consider (the knowledge of) the discernment of dreams as the practical answer to the problem of demonic dreams, especially with regard to lay Christians. For him, the perfect solution was the tenacious conservation of true faith. Demons could never do any harm by dreams to a man who kept his faith firmly.⁶³ Perceivably, Augustine appraised demonic dream attacks and deceptions as less menacing and detrimental than Tertullian or Evagrius did. He therefore did not suggest any practical remedies (such as fasting, almsgiving, keeping vigil and sleeping on the ground, as suggested by Evagrius) for demonic dream attacks.

More significantly, he presupposed that there was a salvific meaning concealed in the phenomena of demonic dreams. In the last chapter of the dream texts of *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine remarked, “Can anyone trust in his own innocence as a defense against the various incursions of demons? Let no one think so, for even baptised infants, who are certainly nothing but innocent, are sometimes attacked by demons.” God permitted this tragedy in order to “teach us hereby to bewail the calamities of this life and to desire the felicity of the eternal life.” He then drew an analogy: “in most cases, the treatment and remedies are tortures in themselves, so that patients are saved from a painful end only by a painful cure.”⁶⁴

⁶² *De Genesi* 12.13.27-12.14.30 (BA 49.378; trans. Taylor, 198).

⁶³ *De Genesi* 12.13.27-12.14.30 (BA 49.370-78). Cf. Athenagoras, *Legatio* 27 (ed. W.R. Schoedel, 66). For the gift of distinguishing dreams, see Gregory the Great, *Dialogorum* 4.50 (SC 265.174-6) which mentions that only “the saints” possess the gift.

⁶⁴ *De Civitate* 22.22 (BA 37.650; trans. Dyson, 1156), in which Augustine’s last discourse on dreams in this work appears.; Cf. *Epistula* 166.16 (CSEL 44.568-70), which mentions that infants suffer from all things with God’s knowledge.

In other words, every diabolical dream assault on people, both the innocent and wicked, had a salvific purport according to divine providence. One's suffering in demonic dreams could always discover a redemptively curative meaning. It is not surprising to read in Augustine's writing that a demonic dream was interpreted not only as an incident which strengthened the dreamer's faith, but also as a remarkable testimony to God's miracle.⁶⁵

Demons in the oneirological demonology of Augustine were weaker than in that of Tertullian, Lactantius or Evagrius. Demons could achieve nothing by means of any power belonging to their nature except what God consented. Without God's permission they could not play dream tricks on people. With a righteous purpose, God allowed demons to assail or deceive humans through dreams. Accordingly, in Augustine's oneirology, demonic dreams were not merely employed by demons for their raid against humanity but indirectly utilised by God for His salvation. To Christians, without keeping true faith demonic dreams could be destructive, but with it they could be redemptive.

Demons might presume that they played dream tricks masterly. Yet it was, in fact, the omnipotent and omniscient God who creatively directed the whole drama in which demons, together with their trickery, were ingeniously cast and deployed in the plots of a universal salvation scheme. In Augustine's theology everything, including the evil, the detrimental or the illusory, could find its sacred meaning or salvific orientation.

Here we can observe the hermeneutical and methodological relationships: Augustine's oneirology explicated his demonology, which advocated his soteriology.

⁶⁵ This dream testimony, recorded in *De Civitate* 22.8.5 (BA 37.570), tells of a Carthaginian doctor's dream.

The former two were doctrinally integrated and soteriologically climaxed in the latter's core message. Eventually, demonic dreams were dogmatically transformed by Augustine through his oneirologically demonological discourses into a divine-providential, salvific instrumentality.

5. John Cassian

Among church fathers, it was most likely Cassian who took demonic dreams most seriously. He deemed them to be a diabolically powerful and guileful device, which had the capability not only to soil the purity of monks, but also to lead them into heresy. Christians should give no credit to their dreams, as they could never be beneficial toward, but could only be damaging to, true faith. To a large extent, Cassian's dream discourses provided a theological theory and proper nourishment for a later Christian anti-dream movement to thrive.

Cassian noted that there were three causes of nocturnal emission, with the first two being a surfeit of food or a careless mind. The third cause referred to provocation by demons, the snares of a mocking enemy. The devil, envying the chastity of monks, was always waiting for a good chance to sully it. He recognised their state of sleep as an unguarded moment. Therefore, he strived intently to disgrace them by sending them obscene dreams during their repose. The voluptuous dreams sent from demons targeted in particular those who were the beginners of spiritual discipline or "those whose bodies have not yet been enfeebled by the lengthy chastisement of fasting."⁶⁶

In addition, Cassian cautioned his audience that the devil's subtle suggestions

⁶⁶ *Collationes* 22.3.6 (SC 64.118; trans. B. Ramsey, *ACW* 57.765); 22.3.1 (SC 64.116); *De Institutis* 2.13; 3.5.1 (SC 109.82; 109.106).

through dream messages could blight their spiritual fruits. The devil “tries to insinuate in us by way of fantastic and foolish dreams...He would preoccupy us with them and entangle us in them when we awake shortly thereafter, so that he himself may take the best of our firstfruits and be the first to garner them.”⁶⁷

Reading the full passage of Deuteronomy 13:1-3,⁶⁸ perhaps the most pungent anti-dream remark in the Bible, Cassian warned his monks of diabolical dream deceits which could convincingly lead them to heretical beliefs. While confirming that God was faithful, and would not permit them to be tried beyond their capacity, Cassian maintained that there were many who were unable to resist the stratagem of evil spirits owing to the negligence or weakness of their mind.⁶⁹

Cassian told the story of a monk from Mesopotamia who was deluded by demonic dreams due to his neglect of the practice of obtaining the gift of discernment. This monk maintained an abstinence which very few in that province could imitate and which he had practised for many years hidden alone in his cell. Yet after so many toils and virtues in which he had exceeded all the monks in that place, “he was so deceived by diabolical revelations and dreams,..., that he lapsed wretchedly into Judaism and the circumcision of the flesh (*est ad extremum diabolicis reuelationibus somniisque delusus, ..., ad Iudaismum et concisionem carnis lapsu miserabili uolueretur*).”⁷⁰

Cassian was so concerned about demonic dream machinations that he eventually defined the consummation of a monk’s chastity as “that no wanton pleasure would touch a monk when he is awake and that no illusory dreams would

⁶⁷ *Collationes* 21.26.4 (SC 64.102; trans. Ramsey, 740). Cf. *Institutis* 3.5.1 (SC 109.106).

⁶⁸ In *Collationes*, Cassian quoted this full passage twice (13.14; 15.1 [SC 54.172; 54.211]).

⁶⁹ 1 Cor 10:12-3; *Collationes* 13.14 (SC 54.172); also see 15.1 (SC 54.211).

⁷⁰ *Collationes* 2.8 (SC 42.119; trans. Ramsey, 89-90). Cf. *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* 2.9-10 (ed. A.J. Festugière, 37-8).

lead him astray when he is asleep.”⁷¹ Plainly, a monk could not win his battle against demons until he could overcome demonic dreams. It is not difficult to sense from Cassian’s writings the formidable nature of these dreams.

While Cassian’s dream theory elucidated demonic dreams, his demonology represented the ingenuity of demons in exploiting dreams to entrap people. Yet, unlike most of the patristic dream theorists, Cassian intended not merely to construct or promote his doctrine of demons through oneirological demonology. He went much further, and through it, he ultimately established an anti-dream doctrine.

In *Collationes*, Cassian wrote that the devil may deliver concupiscent dreams to Christians, especially new believers or the beginners of spiritual discipline, in order to arouse sexual excitement and cause nocturnal ejaculation, which defiled their purity. But to the more experienced monks, the devil, knowing that they may not readily be lured by erotic dream images, could even pollute them “without any irritation of the flesh or consent of the mind, nor by the illusion of some fantasy, but by the simple emission of fluid, thus keeping us from Holy Communion.” In this way, the devil impelled them to assume that they had made no progress in bodily discipline and should eschew advanced practice.⁷² It seems that the devil presented in Cassian’s dream texts could induce people to naturally reach orgasm by sending

⁷¹ *Collationes* 12.16.2 (SC 54.145; trans. Ramsey, 454); cf. 12.7 (SC 54.131-3); *De Institutis* 6.10-11 (SC 109.274).

⁷² *Collationes* 22.3.6 (SC 64.118; trans. Ramsey, 765). Cf. Deut 23:11-2; 1 Cor 11:27-30; *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* 16.1-2 (ed. Festugière, 112-3) and 20.1 (“Take care that no one who has pondered on the image of a woman during the night dare to approach the sacred Mysteries, in case any of you has had a dream while entertaining such an image.” [ed. Festugière, 118-9; trans. N. Russell, 105]); The Prayer of Basil the Great in *Great Compline*: “...sanctify me by the descent of Thy Holy Spirit, that rising up from the darkness of my impurities and demonic dreams...and thus to partake without guilt or condemnation of...Life-giving Mysteries.” (trans. by Archpriest Alexander Lebedeff); Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* 1.27.9 (ed. B. Colgrave, 98-102). For the devil’s use of erotic dreams to discourage Christians from advanced practice, cf. *Verba Seniorum* 5.24 (PL 73.879-80), and deter them from the communion, cf. (Pseudo-) Justin, *Quaestiones et Responsiones ad Orthodoxos* 21 (PG 6:1269); Timothy of Alexandria, *Quaestiones* 12 (ed. P. Joannou, 247-8). See Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 191, note 200; D. Brakke, “Nocturnal Emissions,” 434-5.

them erotic dreams, and could also directly manipulate their genitals to discharge semen without exciting their sensation. The devil became a master of genital function as well as orgasm.

Cassian went on to cite the circumstance of a brother who, goaded by the devil, experienced nocturnal discharge on every eve of the Eucharist over a long period of time. This brother, although he possessed a constant purity of heart and body due to his great watchfulness and humility and was never attempted by salacious dream images, nevertheless “used to be sullied in his sleep by an unclean emission whenever he would be preparing himself to receive the Lord’s communion.” After avoiding communion for a long time on account of fear, he finally raised this problem with the elders, “the spiritual physicians (*spiritualium medicorum*).” After their careful examination, these physicians excluded the possibility of either a satiety of food or a heedless mind causing his nightly discharge and judged the devil to be the actual provoker.⁷³

As a result of the physicians’ healing counsel, the brother was again able to participate in communion. It became evident that the whole affair was a trick of the devil’s, as the brother’s emission ceased soon after partaking of the body of Christ and obtaining a remedy against the demonic attacks. Cassian stated that if the brother were continually caught “in the wicked enemy’s clever trap,” he would be deprived of the medicine of heavenly healing. He then concluded that “frequently this most unclean emission is induced not by a vice of flesh or soul but by the adversary’s sly trickery.”⁷⁴

⁷³ *Collationes* 22.6.1-3 (SC 64.121-2; trans. Ramsey, 767-8). Cf. 2.13.7 (Christ as a “secret physician [*secretus medicus*].” SC 42.127) and 7.28 (a monastic elder as a “most merciful physician [*clementissimo medico*]. SC 42.270).”

⁷⁴ *Collationes* 22.6.1-4 (SC 64.121-2; quotation from 22.6.4. trans. Ramsey, 768-9). Cf. Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 19.5-11 (PTS 51.553-7 [column 19.7-18]). For the decree that demoniacs

Noteworthy, it is in this dream text of Cassian's that we see (probably for the first time in Christianity) the rise of the vocation of spiritual physicians in the Church, whose specialty was to examine and then judge the real cause of one's orgasm in sleep. Although these practitioners were the "spiritual" elders, they (perhaps without any medical professional knowledge) could diagnose the "physical" disorder and proscribe an effective remedy.

Moreover, the devil was so clever that he could devise a resourceful strategy to hereticise even the monk who had kept extremely strict abstemious practice for many years. In the Mesopotamian monk's case, Cassian portrayed in detail how the devil used dreams to devour this monk's orthodox belief. At first, the devil, wanting to get him acclimated to having visions so that he could be led on to a subsequent delusion, had for a long time like a messenger of truth revealed to him things which were perfectly true. He finally showed him, on the one side, the Christian people along with the apostles and martyrs who are the founders of our faith, standing in darkness and filth, disfigured with all squalor, and on the other side, the Jewish people together with Moses, the patriarchs and the prophets, dancing with the greatest joy and shining with a splendid light. By these "diabolical revelations and dreams" he was persuaded that "if he wished to share their merit and bliss, he must hasten to be circumcised." In the end, he actually relapsed into circumcision and Judaism.⁷⁵

should be allowed to receive the Eucharist, cf. *Collationes* 7.30 (SC 42.271-2); The First Council of Orange (in 411) 14. For the Eucharist as the heavenly healing remedy, cf. *Collationes* 23.21 (SC 64.167-8); Ignatius, *Epistle to Ephesians* 20.2 (ed. M.W. Holmes, 198). Ambrose, *De Sacramentis* 5.4.25 (SC 25.132). Augustine, *Epistula* 54 (CCL 31.226-33) and *Sermones* 227 (PL 38.1099-1101).

⁷⁵ *Collationes* 2.8 (SC 42.119 trans. Ramsey, 90). Concerning the issue of judaizing Christians, cf. Chrysostom, *Adversus Judaeos Orationes*, particularly 1.8 (PG 48.855-6), which mentions the devil and a judaized Christian. Also see R.L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 68-79 (for judaizing Christians in the four century) and 116-122, 148-153 (for Chrysostom's Rhetoric and Homilies on the judaizers); Wayne Meeks, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era* (Missoula: Scholars Press,

Like Augustine, Cassian's advice on surmounting the problem of demonic erotic and deceitful dreams was the acquisition of the gift of discernment. He declared, "None of these men would have been so miserably deceived if they had endeavoured to obtain the power of discretion. Thus the falls and experiences of many give proof of how dangerous it is not to be without the grace of discretion."⁷⁶ But Cassian also pointed out that this gift could be possessed neither by many nor by human effort alone without divine bestowal. Only the monk who had sought it with utter attentiveness and who was really humble could possibly gain it.⁷⁷ The more astute the devil was, the more humble a monk should be; the more potent demonic dreams appeared to be, the more ardent a monk's practice of seeking the gift ought to be.⁷⁸

Cassian, who discussed dreams in great detail and contributed substantially to the formulation of patristic dream theory, was undoubtedly one of the most illustrious Christian dream theorists. However, his entire work surprisingly contains no mention or implication that God uses dreams to reveal truths, perform miracles or communicate with humanity. The gist of his oneirological teaching was that dreams originated with either humans or demons. They were simply unmeaningful, lascivious or deceitful. They had baneful, rather than any beneficial, effects on Christian faith. In addition, the majority lacked the ability to discern dreams, and even a persistently abstinent monk's faith could be ravaged by them. For these reasons, all Christians should trust neither dreams nor oneiric messages. Expressively,

1978), 25-36 (for the demonisation of the Jews and the deterrence of Christians from participating in Jewish rites).

⁷⁶ *Collationes* 2.8.2 (SC 42.119 trans. Ramsey, 90).

⁷⁷ *Collationes* 2.1; 2.10 (SC 42.110-2; 42.120-1). Like Augustine (*De Genesi* 12.13.28 [BA 49.374]), Cassian also quoted 1 Cor 12:10 in his discussion of this gift.

⁷⁸ For the study of the mutuality and reciprocity between monks and demons, see Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk*, particularly 213-39.

a patristic anti-dream propaganda was shaped in Cassian's dream-demon discourse.⁷⁹

Cassian's anti-dream strategy is reminiscent of that of Irenaeus, who was probably the first Christian to propose an anti-dream doctrine, in which heretics and demons were connected with each other through dreams. Irenaeus used Simon Magus as a case for his indoctrination. Firstly, he characterised Simon as an individual who feigned faith and led astray the people of Samaria through sorcery and "from whom all sorts of heresies derive their origin (*ex quo uniuersae haereses substiterunt*)."⁸⁰ Then, he revealed that Simon's magical performances, including oneiromancy, actually relied on demons known as "familiaris (*paredri*, from παρῑδρους)" and "dream-senders (*oniropompi*, from ὀνειροπόμους)."⁸¹ Eventually, as Simon, the first heretic in Christianity, was associated with demons through dreams, dreams were transformed into a condemned subject.⁸² To a certain extent, dreams, demons and heresy then became almost interchangeable terms. It was using this formula that Irenaeus created a paradigm of Christian anti-dream doctrine which was later adopted by Cassian.

For Cassian, demon-inspired dreams could be considered as a powerful device of the devil for tainting the purity of Christians and perverting their faith. The subjection of demonic dreams had to be practically treated as a daily and arduous task in a monk's disciplinary life. To vanquish diabolical dreams, monks had to first

⁷⁹ For Christian anti-dream propaganda, cf. (Pseudo-) Clement of Rome, *Homiliae* 9.14-5 (GCS 42.137-8), 17.14-9; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes* 18.42 (PG 35.1040-41); Gregory of Nyssa, *De Virginitate* 3.5, 23.3 (SC 119.284-6, 530-6); Isidore, *Sententiae* 3.6.8 ("*Quamuis nonnulla uera sint somnia, facile tamen eis credi non opus est, ... Tam facile igitur somniis fides habenda non est, ne forte Satanas, in angelum lucis se transformans, quemlibet incautum fallat, et aliqua erroris fraude decipiat.*" CCL 111.215-20); *Cantica Canticorum* Book 6 (PL 206:367). Le Goff, *L'imaginaire Médiéval*, 309-10.

⁸⁰ *Adversus Haereses* 1.23.2 (SC 264.314; trans. ANF 1.348).

⁸¹ Ibid. 1.23.4 (SC 264.318).

⁸² Ibid. 1.23.2-4; 1.25.3; 2.31.2 (SC 264.314-20; 264.336-8; 264.386); see Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutatio* 6.15, 7.32 (GCS 26.141; 26.218-20). Cf. Acts 8:9-25; Justin, *Apologia* 1.18 (ed. P. Parvis, 122) also mentions both "παρῑδροι and ὀνειροπόμοι." Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.7 (SC 31.166-9). Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 159-96.

be humble as well as make strenuous efforts in order to acquire the gift of discernment, which they required to look through oneiric fraudulence. Interestingly enough, as the devil became a genital expert in causing people to attain orgasm, the monastic elder emerged as a physiological master in preventing them from reaching it.

Cassian's dream texts accurately reflect his doctrine of demons, through which he inaugurated an anti-dream enterprise. The devil was smarter and more sexually powerful, and his dream deceit more effective, in Cassian's oneirological demonology than in that of any other church father. He could fabricate dreams with a cogent message which could even convert a devout monk to a heretical cult. Once dreams could be exploited diabolically as well as heretically, Cassian, predictably, promoted that Christians, including senior abstentious monks, should identify all dreams as informatively deceitful and spiritually perilous.

In Cassian's work, there seems to be an anti-dream tactic, in which the acts of evil spirits are first tracked through the dreams they send, and by which a hostile attitude towards dreams is then brought into monastic instructions through demonology. Hermeneutically, his oneirology and demonology together fashioned a patristic anti-dream advocacy which was buttressed by an archaic deuteronomic tradition. In terms of propagational methodology, through his doctrinal teachings, which had a profound influence in both the Western and Eastern Churches, this anti-dream movement found its way into late ancient Christian monasteries as well as medieval Christian theology.

Conclusion

In the Bible or Hellenistic Jewish literature, demonic power entirely vanishes

in the realm of dreams. It is solely the divine who can master dreams, sometimes even using them to assault humanity. However, in patristic oneirology, like Greco-Roman oneirology, the power of demons resembles that of the divine in terms of the manipulation of dreams. As a matter of fact, demon-inspired dreams captured the attention of early Christian writers to a greater extent than human-inspired ones. In comparison, only a few were engaged in conceptualising or theorising the latter. Among church fathers, Tertullian, Lactantius, Evagrius, Augustine and John Cassian provided more detailed explanations of demonic dreams than any other figures.

According to these church fathers, the nature of demon-inspired dreams could be seen as a means of diabolically terrifying assault, erotic temptation and cunning deception. Through dreams demons could raid a man from the inside and force him to believe and fear that they were the divine. In this way, even those who were collectively protected by a very strong, spiritual shield could be individually invaded with great facility by demons. The devil also generated aphrodisiac dreams to lure and demoralise monks. He could appear as a lecherous woman in their dreams in order to have sexual intercourse with them and thus sully the purity of their souls. He even made a monk experience nocturnal emission whenever he had been ready to approach Holy Communion.

In addition, dreams could be exerted by demons to mislead Christians away from true faith. They were the seeds of diabolically heretical allurements. Pagan religious history teems with examples of how demons through dream tricks decoyed people into trusting bogus deities. Dreams facilitated Satan's enterprise in the human world. Hence, for these church fathers, to uncover the dream tricks of demons was the key to the disclosure of their machinations as well as their true identity.

To Tertullian, there seemed to be no way to overcome demon-inspired dreams,

as they could hardly be differentiated from divinely-inspired ones, whereas to Augustine or Cassian, the gift of discernment was the way. However, the fact that only a few Christians could obtain this gift required a more practical solution for the majority. For Augustine, the answer was to keep true faith and, for Cassian, to trust no dreams.

Furthermore, these church fathers were not only concerned with the peril of demonic dreams to Christians or Christian faith, but were also fascinated by its capacity to disseminate their doctrinal teachings about demons. When these church fathers noticed the imperative of alerting Christians to false dreams, they discovered a suitable way of educating them about demons. That is, by demonising dreams, they could more effectively and practically present their demonology. As dreams, which occurred daily in everyone's life, turned into the devil's secret and a powerful weapon, their teachings concerning demons become germane and crucial to everybody. In order to avert demonic dream attack, every Christian had to follow their instructions of oneirological demonology.

In fact, these church fathers' ideas of demonic dreams were more reflections of their opinions on demonology, rather than on oneirology. Their discourses on these dreams mainly aimed to represent the devil's nature, character, power or acts. For the promotion of their demonology, Tertullian articulated a theory of demon-inspired dreams which irretrievably rendered early Christian dreamers hopeless at their discernment of dreams, while Lactantius doctrinally diabolised a famous divinely-inspired dream in Roman literature which was very likely only a fictional account.

Like Irenaeus, some of these church fathers perceived or established a link between dreams and heresy. As dissident challenges and doctrinal discord arose as a

major threat to the early Church, every person or thing that actually or potentially had a connection with, or implication of, heresy had to be condemned as heretical, and even identified as a diabolical agent. Consequentially, demonology was developed and excessively inflated by church fathers, who diabolically construed many objects. In this radical milieu, dreams, one of the most mysterious and unaccountable phenomena, which used to be employed by pagan gods and influential heretical leaders (such as those of the Carpocratians and Montanists),⁸³ were inevitably implicated in doctrinal disputes.⁸⁴ Sooner or later, they were to be hereticised or demonised, and a patristic anti-dream movement was launched. In this regard, dogmatic conflict and heretical prosperity orientated patristic interpretations of dreams, their nature and origin.

We can now recognise the methodological and hermeneutical relationships between dreams and demons in the works of these church fathers. On the one hand, dreams and their related issues (such as nightly emission) provided a stage for them to expound and express their conceptions of the devil and his works. Their oneirology enabled demons to freely access and maneuver people's dreams. It increased the devil's intelligence and power to such an extent that not only could he easily attack, allure or delude people, but he could almost be comparable to the divine. Demons could even do what only God was capable of in the Bible. That is, they could send dreams and also interpret them for their recipients. To imagine demons having this ability would be inconceivable (and even blasphemous) for biblical writers. Nonetheless, all these gross exaggerations of demonic predominance

⁸³ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 1.25.1-3 (SC 264.332-8); *Passio Sanctorum Montani et Lucii* 1-23 (ed. H. Musurillo, 214-38); *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* 1.1-5 (SC 417.98-104); Tertullian, *De Anima* 44.3; 47.2-4 (ed. Waszink, 61; 65-6).

⁸⁴ Waszink has observed that the existence of dreams caused by demons "belongs to the traditional commonplaces of Christian apologetics." Waszink, *Tertulliani*, 502.

by their oneirology made good sense in their demonological ambition. The more power demons held, the more frightened and vigilant Christians would be, and the more indispensable and practical the demonology of these church fathers would become.

On the other hand, these church fathers dogmatically scrutinised dreams. They implicated dreams in their doctrinal battle with heretics, and through analysing them they condemned their adversaries. Their doctrinalisation of dreams resulted in the creation of diabolised dissenters as well as oneiric demons. This is where we witness very shocking demon-human sexual intercourse. Also through their demonology, they mounted a Christian anti-dream propaganda and offered solutions to people's oneiric problems (such as nightmares and nocturnal discharge). It is here that we encounter the birth of the specialist (called the spiritual physician) in Church history, who could know exactly the cause of one's seminal discharge.

Indeed, divergent opinions of demonic dreams and demons existed in patristic literature. For example, in Augustine's dream texts, demonic dreams could be harmless and even helpful to Christian faith. Factually they were diabolically enchanted, yet theologically they were divinely deposed and served God's redemption scheme. On the other hand, in the dream texts of most other church fathers mentioned in this chapter, these dreams were totally pernicious and had led many Christians not merely astray from true faith and from God's salvation, but also into a pagan or heretical abyss.

Nevertheless, although each church father may have expressed different interpretations of demonic dreams and demons, they shared a common course of methodology and hermeneutics: their theory of demonic dreams was elaborated in their demonology while their elucidation of demons was articulated by their

oneirology. Through the doctrinal coalescence of oneirology and demonology, they more impressively warned Christians of the detrimentality of both dreams as well as demons. Under their oneirological demonology, the devil through dreams infiltrated into Christian daily life, as did their doctrinal teachings about demons.

With respect to the issues of demonic dreams, these church fathers accorded with the Greco-Roman dream tradition and departed from the biblical or Hellenistic Jewish one. However, their views all emerged from within doctrinal or apologetic discourses, whereas most Greco-Roman views appeared as literary narratives. The fact that their oneirology and demonology were intermingled with each other substantially discriminates their views from others. Surely, patristic views of demon-inspired dreams cannot be rightly appreciated without locating them in the context of the early Christian doctrine of demons. Simultaneously, the doctrine cannot be fully apprehended without considering dreams.

Chapter 5

Dreams as a Site of Epiphany and Their Relation to the Doctrine of God and Christology¹

And at the sound of their voice I was awakened, still chewing something sweet and indescribable. — *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* 4.10.

I felt the wounds long after I awoke from my sleep. — Jerome, *Epistula* 22.30.

Or can any one fall headlong into such an error as to dare to say, that the Son and the Holy Spirit are visible also to men who are awake, but that the Father is not visible except to those who dream? — Augustine, *De Trinitate* 2.18

Jacob...is said in sleep to have had a vision of the Lord; and on that account regarding the place of his dream as sacred,...
— Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicorum* 1.8

According to Mircea Eliade, one of the leading scholars in the field of Phenomenology of Religion, space is not homogeneous; some parts of space are qualitatively different from others. When epiphany occurs in a place, that place becomes sacred. The sacred site depends not on physical or geographical dimensions, but on religious and mysterious ones. The religious always yearn to inhabit the

¹ An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the Second British National Patristic Conference (at the University of Cambridge in 2009) and has been selected to be included in *Studia Patristica*, Vol. 50, eds. Allen Brent and Markus Vinzent (Leuven: Peeters, 2011).

sacred site in order to open themselves to the divine.²

Patristic dream texts hold numerous accounts of a divine manifestation in people's dreams. These reports offer ample evidence that divinely-inspired dreams³ are a sacred venue where epiphany (ἐπιφάνια, a manifestation or appearance of a divinity)⁴ takes place, and where humanity can actually meet the divine. For some church fathers, the divine could be seen or conversed with by humanity only in dreams. Dreams were the locus in which God intervened in human affairs.

Moreover, unlike Greco-Roman authors, early Christian writers related the events of dream epiphany primarily not for the literary (narrative), oneirological or mythological purpose, but for the purpose of propagating Christian doctrines. Almost all the patristic dream texts, which narrated or discussed dream epiphany, aimed to illuminate the doctrine of God or Christology by representing the images and attributes of the divine. When many church fathers encountered the dreams in which epiphany appeared, they not only interpreted but doctrinalised them. At the same time, they melted the two doctrines into their explications of the dreams. Accordingly, their oneirological and doctrinal thoughts were astutely amalgamated and served each other.

In this chapter, I examine several well-known patristic dream texts and argue that the nature of divinely-inspired dreams in these texts can be viewed as a sacred site of epiphany. I also demonstrate the propagationally methodological connection and the hermeneutically reciprocal relationship between dreams and the two

² Mircea Eliade, *Le Sacré et le Profane* (Paris: Gallimard, 1957). English Translation: *The Sacred and the Profane*. Trans. by Willard R. Trask (NY: Harcourt, 1959, reprint, 1987), 20.

³ "Divinely-inspired dream(s)" hereafter in this chapter referred to as "dream(s)," unless specifically stated otherwise.

⁴ In patristic texts, the term ἐπιφάνια was probably first used in this sense by the author of 2 *Clement*. See 2 *Clement* 12.1 (ed. M.W. Holmes, 152), "...τῆς ἐπιφανείας τοῦ θεοῦ (the appearing of God)" ; 17.4 (ed. Holmes, 160), "...τῆς ἐπιφανείας αὐτοῦ (His[Christ's] appearing) ..." Also used as a verb in 1 *Clement* 59.4 and 60.3 (ed. Holmes, 124 and 126).

doctrines in these texts.

1. *The Shepherd of Hermas*

The Shepherd of Hermas was a widely popular dream text in the second- and third-century Christian community.⁵ It comprises five *Visions* (which contain Hermas' dream narratives),⁶ twelve *Mandates* and ten *Similitudes* given to Hermas by the divine. Both the text itself, and many church fathers, testify to the divine origin of dreams in *The Shepherd*.⁷ According to the text, Hermas encountered the divine figure "the Church" (probably Spirit-Christ)⁸ in dreams. Or more precisely, it was the divine who took the initiative in meeting Hermas through dreams, as Hermas himself did not recognise the divine until its identity was revealed to him by an angel. The divine was keen to come to Hermas' dreams and to meet him.

⁵ For the reason why this thesis counts *The Shepherd* as a patristic text, see Introduction of this thesis, footnote 42.

⁶ For two reasons, the visions in *The Shepherd* can be regarded as dreams, although Hermas or the author of the text called them "visions." Firstly, most "visions" came to Hermas when he fell asleep (*Vision* 1.1.3; 2.4.1 [ed. M.W. Holmes, 454; 466]), sat down on his bed (*Vision* 5.1 [ed. Holmes, 500]) and so on (*Vision* 3.1.2; 3.10.6-7 [ed. Holmes, 468; 490]). It is very likely that in fact "those revelatory visions [Hermas' visions] were dreams", as Patricia Miller points out. Secondly, in many early Christian manuscripts, "dream" and "vision" are interchangeable terms. See Patricia Miller, "'All the Words Were Frightful': Salvation by Dreams in the Shepherd of Hermas." In *VC*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (1988), 328 and footnote 5; Frances Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 39, 132; Bart J. Koet, *Dreams and Scripture in Luke-Acts*, 11, 28; I. Mendelsohn, "Dreams," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. I, George A. Buttrick, ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 868; Adela Yarbro Collins, "Vision," in *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, ed. by Paul J. Achtemeier (NY: Harp Collins, 1985, reprint, 1996), 1194-5.

⁷ The text affirms that it was the divine who imparted revelations to Hermas through dreams. See *Vision* 3.1.2; 4.1.3 (ed. Holmes, 468; 494-6) and *Similitude* 6.1.1 (ed. Holmes, 582). Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses* 4.20.2 [SC 100/2.628]), Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* 1.29; 2.1 [SC 30.176; 38.34]), Tertullian (*De Oratione* 16.1-2 [CCL 1.266]) and Origen (*De Principiis* 4.11 [SC 268.312, column 4.2.4]) also treated the dream text as revelation from God.

⁸ The evidence to support the idea that the Church signifies a divine figure can be found in the text. For example, *Similitude* 9.1.1 (ed. and trans. Holmes, 618) states, "I want to explain to you [Hermas] what the Holy Spirit that spoke with you in the form of the Church revealed to you; for that Spirit is the Son of God." Also see *Vision* 2.4.1; 3.1.8-9 (ed. Holmes, 468; 470). In addition, despite its identity remaining uncertain, the female divine figure "the Church" (who appears in Hermas' first four dreams) very likely signifies Spirit-Christ (the combination of the Spirit and Christ), according to the text (e.g. *Similitude* 5.6.4-7; 9.1.1 [ed. Holmes, 580; 618]). Also see J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 94-5, 143. Further, the text may imply that the divine figure is the personification of Wisdom (a female divine figure) in Prov 8-9. Cf. Prov 8:22-30 and *Vision* 1.3.4; 2.4.1 (ed. Holmes, 460; 468); and Prov 9:1 and *Vision* 3.8 (ed. Holmes, 484-6)..

In a dream, Hermas encountered “the Church” unexpectedly, neither by petition nor incubation. When Hermas was upset and weeping for his sin, the divine appeared as an elderly Lady and comforted him in this dream. She then read words about the glories of God to him from the book in her hand. After that, She “touched (ἤψατο)”⁹ Hermas’ “breast (τοῦ στήθους)” and said to him, “Did my reading please you?”¹⁰ In the next dream, the divine assigned Hermas a task face-to-face.¹¹ In another, the divine met Hermas in a “beautiful secluded spot” and invited him twice to sit beside Her. Afterwards, Hermas kneeled down and confessed; and She touched him and said, “Hermas, stop saying all these prayers for your sins. Ask also for righteousness.” She then took Hermas by the hand and immediately raised him up.¹² Finally, in an oneiric vision, the divine revealed an apocalyptic scene to Hermas and interpreted its hidden messages to him.¹³

It seems that the divine entered Hermas’ dreams in order to mitigate his burden and also to delight him by “physical” contact. Apart from assigning a task to Hermas, the divine simply wanted to see him, stay with him, and make the time of their sacred communication and contact in dreams very pleasant. A delightful, “visible” and “touchable” epiphany clearly occurred in Hermas’ dreams.

For the author of *The Shepherd*, dreams were a sacred site where the divine and humanity could encounter each other “visibly” and “physically”. Edith Humphrey remarks that the narrative of Hermas’ first four dreams “communicates to the reader the mysterious quality of the [Hermas’] experience, calling attention to the worlds of the ‘normal’ and ‘supernatural’, and showing where the lines of the two

⁹ *Vision* 1.4.2 (ed. Holmes, 454). Cf. Dan (LXX) 8:18, 10:16-9; Matt 8:3, 17:7; Mark 1:41; Luke 5:13.

¹⁰ *Vision* 1.2.2-3; 1.4.2 (ed. and trans. Holmes, 458; 460-2; quotation from 1.4.2).

¹¹ *Ibid.* 2.4.2-3 (ed. Holmes, 468).

¹² *Ibid.* 3.1.6-9; 3.2.3-4 (ed. and trans. Holmes, 470; 472; quotation from 3.1.6).

¹³ *Ibid.* 4.2.5-4.3.7 (ed. Holmes, 498-500).

worlds converge.”¹⁴ *The Shepherd* announced the possibility for Christians, even lay Christians like Hermas, to have the experience of phenomenal intimacy with the divine through (or in) dreams— another real world in human life.

Nevertheless, *The Shepherd* endeavoured not simply to present the view of dreams, but to diffuse the image and notion of God. Modern scholarship has paid much attention to theological opinions on adoptionism, binitarianism, trinitarianism, or angel-Christology in *The Shepherd*, which are presumed in the text but are in fact vaguely indicated by it, as both Jaroslav Pelikan and Robert Hauck have argued.¹⁵ However, less attention has been given to the appearances and attributes of the divine, especially the female divine figure “the Church”, which were explicitly described by this text. Despite ambiguity surrounding the identity of this female divine figure (due to uncertainty as to whether this was the Spirit or Spirit-Christ), textual evidence leaves no doubt that this figure was a visible representative of God in Hermas’ dreams, who conveyed God’s message to both Hermas and his community.¹⁶

In the dream text, the portrait of this divine figure in Hermas’ dreams as a beautiful, patient, amiable, and approachable lady is very conspicuous.¹⁷ In dreams, the divine figure’s face and clothes, as well as her body and age, are changeable (e.g. the divine figure has been transformed from an old lady, then a middle-age woman,

¹⁴ Edith Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 141.

¹⁵ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*. Vol. I (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1971, new edition, 1975), 175, 183. Robert Hauck, “The Great Fast: Christology in the Shepherd of Hermas.” *Anglican Theological Review*. 75 (1993): 187-98. For the idea of adoptionism, see Adolf von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*. Vol. I (Tübingen, 1931), 211. For the idea of an amalgam of binitarianism and adoptionism, see Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 94-5.

¹⁶ Particularly *Vision* 1.3.1-4; 3.3.4; 4.2.4-7 (ed. Holmes, 458-60; 476; 498).

¹⁷ The text delineates the divine figure as “an elderly woman in a shining garment with a book in her hands” sitting on “a great white chair made of snow-white wool” (*Vision* 1.2.2 [ed. and trans. Holmes, 458]), as “the Church,” who “was created before all things” (*Vision* 2.4.1 [ed. and trans. Holmes, 468]), as a “exceedingly beautiful” and cheerful young lady who sits in the midst of the saints who “have suffered for the sake of the Name” (*Vision* 3.1.9; 3.10.5; 3.13.1 [ed. and trans. Holmes, 470; 490; 494]), and finally as a young lady “dressed as if she were coming out of a bridal chamber, all in white..., and her head covering was a turban, and her hair was white” (*Vision* 4.2.1-2 [ed. and trans. Holmes, 498]).

later a young person, and finally into a virgin bride). Nevertheless, no matter how diverse the divine figure's image may appear to be, Her attributes remain the same: remarkably gentle, merciful and cheerful. The author also drew attention to these attributes through an elaborate description of a sharp contrast between the characteristics of the divine figure and those of the angel of repentance (the shepherd), another leading figure in the narrative.¹⁸ It seems that the divine used dreams as a stage to show Her appearance variously and attributes impressively, while the author employed the dream narrative as a literary skill to impress readers with the divine image.

The primary issue *The Shepherd* dealt with was the availability of postbaptismal forgiveness, with the message in the text declaring the possibility of this.¹⁹ It is not surprising that the author elaborately characterised the invisible God as a merciful divinity by the image of His representative, who was a gentle lady and who always demanded repentance while affirming forgiveness. This divine image may cause sinners to feel more confident and willing to repent since God is merciful— as made known by His representative. As Humphrey writes, “the use of a female figure is particularly apt in apocalypses which stress the theme of humility, and related themes of suffering, repentance and meekness.” That the divine appears as a Lady, a “woman who rules” and who is “the object of chivalrous devotion,” in

¹⁸ For example, in the text the angel repeatedly calls Hermas “foolish man” but never his name, while the divine figure often calls him “Hermas” or even “my man” (*Mandate* 10.2.1; *Similitude* 9.12.1; 6.4.3; 6.5.2; 9.14.4 and *Vision* 1.2.2-4; 1.4.3; 3.1.6, 9; 4.2.2, respectively [ed. Holmes, 536; 642; 590; 590; 648 and 458; 462; 470; 498].) We easily notice the angel as angry, irritable, strict and frightening, whereas the divine figure is smiling, patient, amiable and approachable. (*Vision* 5.4-7; *Mandate* 12.4.1, *Similitude* 5.4.2; 5.5.1; 6.5.2; 9.14.4 and *Vision* 1.4.1-3; 3.1-9; 3.3.1-4; 3.8.1-9, respectively [ed. Holmes, 502; 550; 576; 576-8; 590; 648 and 460-2; 468-70; 474-6; 484-6].) Wherever the divine figure presides over the scene, we find comfort and encouragement, but when the angel does so, we hear condemnation and reproach.

¹⁹ *Vision* 2.2.4-5 (ed. Holmes, 464); *Mandate* 4.4.4 (ed. Holmes, 514).

the text is “a reminder of divine blessing and providence.”²⁰

The Shepherd maintained that dreams could be the place for the divine not only to meet Christians but also to reveal God’s love and care for them. The divine image could be altered and diversified in dreams, and thus represent the divine attributes more impressively. What cannot be changed is that the image must ultimately project the divine as a gentle and merciful One. The dream narrative whereby the divine appeared to Hermas in order to accompany and patiently comfort him also reflects God’s passion and affection for people. The attempt by the author of *The Shepherd* to picture the divine image through Hermas’ dreams, and his understanding of God through the divine image, are now clearer. It is evident that in *The Shepherd* the oneiric view and doctrinal thoughts were closely related and implicitly fused.

Furthermore, this image of the divine (who was eager to manifest itself to people in dreams) may have convinced early Christian readers to believe the authenticity of the epiphany in Hermas’ dream, and therefore to grant the dream text authority. While Hermas’ dreams enabled the author to express a “visible” divine image as well as his understanding of God, the divine image together with the theological meanings it could present were capable of promoting Hermas’ dreams (and their narratives) as authoritative. That is, if the divine image along with doctrinal teachings in the dream text *The Shepherd* was “orthodox” or coincided with early Christian beliefs, the text would gain divine authority. This kind of contextually reciprocal relationship between dream narratives and their presentation of the divine images (and thus the doctrines which this image could express) characterised many accounts of dreams in the patristic texts which followed *The Shepherd*.

²⁰ Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities*, 23, 171, 173.

2. Justin Martyr

Justin never proposed a dream theory, but through dream discourses he voiced his views of God and Christ, of the relationship between the Father and Son, and of the divine manifestation. One of the main aims of Justin's *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo* was to prove that Christ appeared everywhere in the Hebrew Bible. Two of the biblical narratives Justin adduced for his argument were Jacob's two dreams: the ladder dream (Gen 28:10-19) and the he-goats dream (Gen 31:10-13). He explained that the one who appeared to Jacob in his two dreams was in fact the Lord Jesus Christ, rather than God Himself or the angel of God. Justin viewed these two dream narratives as testimonies which showed Christ as the "ὑπηρετοῦντα (minister)," ²¹ Maker and Father of all things, and also as the one who appeared as a man to Abraham, executed His counsel in the judgment of Sodom, wrestled in human form with Jacob, and appeared in a flame of fire from the bush and conversed with Moses. ²²

For Justin, God revealed Himself in the form of Jesus before the patriarchs and Moses. Jesus, therefore, was called both God and Lord of hosts in the Hebrew Bible. God was not visible "on a little portion of the earth," ²³ but Jesus becomes God's visible representative in this world and also in the dream world. ²⁴ Even before His incarnation, the visible face of Christ was everywhere, including people's dreams. Here we may perceive that the biblical narratives of dream epiphany were utilised by Justin chiefly to enunciate his doctrine of God and Christology.

²¹ Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo* 58 (ed. P. Bobichon, [Paradosis 47/1] 338).

²² Ibid. 58; 60 (ed. Bobichon, [Paradosis 47/1] 336-40; 344-6).

²³ Ibid. 60 (ed. Bobichon, [Paradosis 47/1] 344, *ANF* 1.227)

²⁴ Ibid. 36; 58; 60; 85 (ed. Bobichon, [Paradosis 47/1] 272-4; 336-42; 344-6; 416-20).

3. *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*

Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis (hereafter *Passio*) was one of the most extraordinary dream texts in early Christianity.²⁵ It had been so authoritative and influential that Christians, particularly those in North Africa, considered it as canonical Scripture.²⁶ It narrated five dreams (four seen by Perpetua and one by Saturus)²⁷ and the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas at Carthage.

In her first dream, Perpetua climbed a golden ladder to heaven, where she saw the Lord, appearing as a grey-haired man, milking sheep in the heavenly garden, with many thousands of saints dressed in shining white robes. The Lord then said to her, “I am glad you have come, my child (*Bene uenisti, tignon* [τέκνον]).”²⁸ Perpetua, like most Christians, perhaps had wished to have, but never had, the experience of seeing her Lord and hearing His voice. Yet, it was the dream, rather than any human effort, ritual or religious practice, through which her wish was fulfilled. The Lord

²⁵ *Passio* was very likely the first and only known text written in a woman’s name by her own hand and the only first-person account of a Christian woman’s feeling and experience before the fourth century. It was widely circulated within the early Christian community and publicly read in churches from the fourth century. Ross S. Kraemer and Shira L. Lander, “Perpetua and Felicitas,” in *The Early Christian World*, Vol. I, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), 1048; Herbert Thurston ed., *Butler’s Lives of the Saints*. Vol. I, 498.

²⁶ *Passio* was so highly esteemed within the Christian community that Augustine found it necessary to warn people frequently that the text and its view was neither canonical nor on the same level with Scripture. Many church fathers’ writings (e.g. Tertullian and Augustine) also testified to the text’s popularity. See Tertullian, *De Anima* 55.3-4 (ed. J.H. Waszink, 73-4); Augustine, *De Natura et Origine Animae* 1.10.12 (*BA* 22.398); *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 47.13 (*CCL* 38.548 [*NPNF* 8, column 48.12]); and *Sermones* 280.3 (*PL* 38.1281-2). Also Herbert Thurston ed., *Butler’s Lives of the Saints*, 493; and Brent Shaw, “The Passion of Perpetua,” in *Past and Present*, No. 139 (Oxford University Press, 1995), 37.

²⁷ All five “visions” in *Passio* can be deemed as dreams because they occurred while their recipients were in non-awake state (a state of sleep during either the day or the night). In addition, they can be classified as divinely-inspired dreams according to the textual evidence: (a) the introduction of the text, (b) the conversation between Perpetua and her brother (*Passio* 4.1-2 [*SC* 417.112]) before the first dream occurred and (c) the name both dreamers (Perpetua and Saturus) called their dreams (that is, “vision,” which signified, in their context, something sent from the divine and appeared to be seen visually by supernatural means). Several church fathers (e.g. Tertullian and Augustine) also viewed the dreams in *Passio* as the dreams which came from the divine. See Tertullian, *De Anima* 55.4 (ed. Waszink, 74); Augustine, *Sermones* 394 (*PL* 39.1715-6).

²⁸ *Passio* 4.8-9 (*SC* 417.116; trans. H. Musurillo, 111).

unveiled Himself and spoke with her without any agent. This happened neither in a sacred temple nor in the holy heaven, but in a dream.

In the final scene of this dream, Perpetua is eating a little cheese given by the Lord, with all around saying “Amen.” The most distinctive and impressive description in this scene is probably the phrase: “And at the sound of their voice I was awakened, still chewing something sweet and indescribable (*et ad sonum uocis experta sum, conmanducans adhuc dulce nescio quid*).”²⁹ This description illustrates that Perpetua was “really” eating the heavenly holy food, at least from the perspective of her sense of taste (and perhaps her stomach also). The reality could either be that she had been actually eating an authentic sweet substance from the moment she was in the dream world till the moment she awoke, or that her feeling of eating the holy food in the dream was so real and vivid that it continued into her waking state. In either case, the dream offered her a genuine, physical contact with the heavenly divine realm (again, at least from the perspective of her sense of taste), while she remained in the earthly realm. Her spiritual experience in the dream generated an extended effect which enabled her to actually taste the things which only existed in heaven.

The fifth dream of *Passio* delineates that Perpetua and another martyr Saturus were brought to an area whose walls seemed to be constructed of light. Then they entered in a place to greet the Lord, “an aged man with white hair and a youthful face.” Thereupon, “we kissed the aged man and he touched our faces with his hand (*osculati sumus illum, et de manu sua traiecit nobis in faciem*).”³⁰

Passio recounted that the Lord disclosed Himself to Perpetua visibly, audibly

²⁹ Ibid. 4.10 (SC 417.116-8; trans. Musurillo, 113). Peter Brown’s translation for the last part is: “chewing some sweet substance.” Peter Brown, *The Body and Society*, 77.

³⁰ *Passio* 12.1-7 (SC 417.146-50; quotation from 12.3 and 5; trans. Musurillo, 121)

and tangibly in the dreams in which Perpetua and Saturus experienced not only joyful journeys, but also the things in the heavenly realm through their “the-other” senses of sight, hearing, taste and touch. Dreams thus became a sacred venue where epiphany took place. Until the moment of awaking from their dreams, they may have never realised that there had always existed a “visible” holy place, dreams, in this mundane world, besides the one in heaven where the divine presides.

Both Tertullian and Augustine also appreciated the reality of Perpetua’s encounter with the divine in dreams. Tertullian described Perpetua’s experience of meeting the Lord in dreams as “[that] she received of Paradise.”³¹ Augustine believed that Perpetua through dreams not only met the Lord but also “received new milk ere she shed her precious blood.”³²

Furthermore, dreams in *Passio*, like those in *The Shepherd*, were inseparably related to and permeated by the doctrine of God. The first dream in *Passio* narrates that Perpetua came to the heavenly garden and saw a grey-haired (*canum*) shepherd milking sheep. Joyce Salisbury notices that the image of heaven in this scene owes more to the *Apocalypse of St. Peter* than of the *Book of Revelation* and also that the shepherd as a welcoming guide had appeared in *The Shepherd of Hermas*, rather than in other texts, which later became canonical.³³ The image of the shepherd as an old man has also provoked many discussions. However, few would argue that for Perpetua the shepherd did not signify the Lord as the Good Shepherd in the Bible (e.g. Ps 23; John 10:1-29), even though early Christian iconography often portrayed the Good Shepherd as a young man, rather than old.³⁴ Like the image of heaven, the

³¹ *De Anima* 55.4 (ed. Waszink, 74).

³² Augustine, *Sermones* 280.2-4 (*PL* 38.1281-2); 394 (*PL* 39.1715; trans. W.H. Shewring, 37).

³³ Joyce Salisbury, *Perpetua’s Passion* (London: Routledge, 1997), 102.

³⁴ As Thomas Heffernan argues, “[it] would be an unnecessarily critical literalism to look to the dream record for *figurae* which followed precise external representations of them.” Thomas Heffernan,

image of the Lord in the early Christianity could be varied, rather than single, fixed or unchangeable. The divine image together with Perpetua's joyful experience of her encounter with the Lord in the dream mirrored that the Lord was very amiable, considerate and pleasant.

In addition, *Passio* pronounced that the divine is holy but never remote. Even a new adherent, like Perpetua, could "see" and feel the "real" presence of the Lord while she still resided in this mundane world, even in prison. Through dreams the Lord met Perpetua, alleviated her suffering and encouraged her, all by Himself, rather than through any agent. The author of the prologue to *Passio* therefore stressed that contemporary Christians should experience the divine promise and power as biblical figures and Perpetua did. God was a living God who actively showed miracles and did new things in the present as in the past. Contemporary Christians should be able to receive prophecies, visions and dreams from the divine. Apparently, this theological teaching first benefited the dream text of *Passio* itself. It implied that Perpetua's dream was one of the proofs, if not the first one, of the divine miracle or the God-sent dream in Perpetua's community. Before long, the dream text found itself recognised as canonical by many early Christian communities.

4. Tertullian

Like Justin, Tertullian also expressed his beliefs about God and Christ through dream discourses, not through dream narratives. Tertullian contended that God was absolutely invisible. Although the Son of God was visible, His

Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 208. Moreover, the description that many thousands of people clad in shining white robes stood around the shepherd gives a clue to the identity of this shepherd as the Lord Christ, based on the biblical narrative in *The Book of Revelation*.

manifestation, with the exception of His incarnate one, only appeared in visions or dreams. In the fourteenth chapter of *Adversus Praxeam*, Tertullian stated twice that the face of Christ could not be seen by humanity except only “in vision and dream (*somnio*), and in a glass and enigma.” People could behold Christ solely in “an imaginary form (*imaginaria forma*).”³⁵ For Tertullian, owing to the ingenuity of dreams in producing imaginary forms, the divine exploited dreams as a special site to display a visionary image of Christ to humanity. Dreams thus became a sacred and common place where Christians were able to “see” the divine.

By means of his discourse on dreams, Tertullian frequently stressed God’s attribute of impartiality. In *De Anima* he repeatedly argued that because of His grand “impartiality (*peraequante*),” no one was now a stranger to God. Therefore, God would give dreams to all people, both pagans (e.g. Nebuchadnezzar) and Christians, just as He would “pour out His Spirit upon all flesh” and “makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.”³⁶ As a result, the majority of people were able to “get their knowledge of God from dreams.”³⁷

In addition, Tertullian argued in support of the natural invisibility of the Father and the visibility of the Son through his dream discussion. In his exegesis of Jacob’s dream of the ladder (Gen 28:10-22), Tertullian, like Justin, commented that the one who Jacob met in his dream at Bethel was Christ, rather than God. This was because, among the Holy Trinity, people could only see the appearance of the Son of God. Yet, what Jacob saw in the dream was actually an “imaginary (*imaginaria*)”

³⁵ *Adversus Praxeam* 14.7, 9 (CCL 2.1177, 1178). Cf. 1 Cor 13:12.

³⁶ *De Anima* 47.2 (ed. Waszink, 65); also see 44.3, 46.11-12, 49.3 (ed. Waszink, 61; 64-5; 67).

³⁷ Ibid. 47.2 (ed. Waszink, 65; trans. E.A. Quain, *FC* 10.285). Here, Tertullian quotes Dan 2, Joel 2:28/Acts 2:17 and Matt 5:45. Cf. Sir 35:15 (“with Him there is no partiality”).

appearance of Christ, instead of His true appearance, which could be seen only through His incarnate form (the appearance of His incarnate flesh) and would not be unveiled again till the Parousia.³⁸

5. Cyprian

Cyprian also had the experience of seeing an oneiric epiphany. According to his biography by Pontius (Cyprian's deacon), the divine visited Cyprian in a dream before his martyrdom. In the dream he saw the divine manifested as a youth taller than man's measure. Although the divine did not say a word, He communicated with Cyprian by gestures or signs through which Cyprian could totally understand His message. For Pontius, this divine visitation was very remarkable and significant for both Cyprian and his readers; therefore, in his writing he stated that he could not omit to report this dream event (*admirabilem visitationem Dei non praeteribo*).³⁹

Cyprian himself promulgated his Christology by glossing biblical dream narratives. Despite the existence of discord surrounding many other issues between them, both Novatian and Cyprian coincidentally shared the idea that the one whom Jacob met in the dream at Bethel was Christ. They presented the same doctrinal argument (i.e. the identity of Christ "is both Angel and God" in the Hebrew Bible) while demonstrating it identically by annotating the biblical dream narratives in Genesis 28 and 31. In his work *Ad Quirinum (Testimonies Against the Jews)*, Cyprian also attempted to prove to the Jews that the Lord Christ was the one who manifested Himself to Jacob in dreams and also who appeared everywhere in the Israelite history by His multiple identities and images, including the One which Jewish people had

³⁸ *Adversus Praxeam* 14.1-10 (CCL 2.1176-8); *Adversus Marcionem* 3.24.10 (CCL 1.543).

³⁹ Pontius, *Vita Cypriani* 12 (Ed. by A.A.R. Bastiaesen, *Vite Dei Santi*. III [Verona, 1975], 30).

rejected and crucified as illustrated in the New Testament.⁴⁰

6. Constantine's Dream

Constantine's dream before the decisive battle of Milvian Bridge in 312 is probably the most well-known dream in Christian history. For many early Christians, particularly Eusebius, it was definitely the most crucial and influential dream because it was associated with the turning point of the fate of early Christianity, the change from an oppressed religion to a favoured and supported one in the Roman Empire.

Two authoritative accounts of Constantine's dream have survived: those given by Lactantius and Eusebius. Lactantius, the tutor in Constantine's household, gave the earliest report. According to him, on the eve of battle, Constantine was directed by the divine in a dream to mark the "heavenly sign of God," a symbol which combines a letter X with a perpendicular line drawn through it and curled at the top, "being the cipher of Christ," on his soldiers' shields. He won the battle and attributed his victory to the aid of the Christian God.⁴¹

Eusebius provided more details with a statement that his account was derived from Constantine himself, who told Eusebius his own testimony and "confirmed his testimony by an oath."⁴² One day about noon Constantine and all his army saw a sign of the cross in the sky, bearing the inscription, "by this sign you shall conquer (τούτῳ νίκα / *in hoc [signo] vinces*)."⁴³ But Constantine, a pagan at that time, did not know the meaning of the sign. That night, Christ "appeared to him" in his dream with the

⁴⁰ *Ad Quirinum* 2.1; 2.5 (CCL 3.28-30; 3.34). Novatian, *De Trinitate* 19 (CCL 4.48-51).

⁴¹ Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 44 (ed. by J.L. Creed, 62-3).

⁴² *Vita Constantini* 1.28 (GCS 7.21).

⁴³ *Ibid.* 1.28 (GCS 7.21).

same sign, and commanded him to make a likeness of that sign and use it as a safeguard in all engagements with his enemies. Constantine awoke and “was impressed with wonder at the divine manifestation which had been presented to his sight.”⁴⁴ He then asked his workers to fashion the standard for his army which bore “the symbol of the Saviour’s name, two letters indicating the name of Christ by means of its initial characters, the letter P being intersected by X in its centre,” and also to inscribe the Christian motif on his soldiers’ helmets.⁴⁵ Following the divine instruction received through the dream, Constantine defeated Maxentius.

It is apparent that Lactantius and Eusebius offered different versions of the dream account.⁴⁶ Yet both of them highlighted the dream in which the epiphany took place. In his description of the dream account (Ch. 28-32, totally five paragraphs), Eusebius even repeated three times that Christ “appeared to him [Constantine].”⁴⁷

Scholars have observed that Eusebius added considerable personal and theological interpretations of Constantine’s dream (as well as his victory) in his report. Whereas those interpretations may prove him a dishonest historian in the eyes of many nineteenth-century rationalistic historians, they can make contributions to our research. That is, from those interpretations in which dream narratives and theological ideas are inextricably intertwined, we may discern Eusebius’ understanding of God, and his use of the divine image for reinforcing his account of

⁴⁴ Ibid. 1.32 (GCS 7.22; trans. E.C. Richardson, *NPNF* 1.491).

⁴⁵ Ibid. 31 (GCS 7.22; trans. Richardson, 491).

⁴⁶ Despite the difference between these two versions, as well as the uncertainty over some details, the outline of the dream account is not in dispute. Moreover, the occurrence of this dream could not be Eusebius’s personal deceit. See Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 612-20. Dodds also remarks, “We need not adopt the rationalistic view of nineteenth-century historians, who saw it [Constantine’s dream] a statesmanlike invention designed to impress the mob...His dream did indeed serve a useful purpose, but that does not prove it a fiction.” E.R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge: University Press, 1965, reprint, 2001), 47. Sozomen also mentioned Constantine’s dreams in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.8 (GCS 50.16-9).

⁴⁷ *Vita Constantini* 1.29; 1.32 (GCS 7.21; 7.22-3). Also See *Historia Ecclesiastica* 9.9-11 (SC 55.60-75).

Constantine's dream.

In his dream report, Eusebius emphasised that the Christian God was a Supreme God, the Ruler of all, who had actively intervened in human affairs and was the Author of victory, including Constantine's. Roman gods had deceived many previous emperors through flattering predictions and oracles, which promised all prosperity but at last were verified untrustworthy. The Christian God, on the other hand, was the patron not only for His elected people but also for the pagan, particularly the elected kingly authority, who earnestly sought His assistance. Unlike other Roman gods, this God stood by Constantine to protect him and invoked "His Christ to be his [Constantine's] preserver and aid" who revealed Himself to Constantine in his dream.⁴⁸

For Eusebius, it was this God who "drew the tyrant [Maxentius], as it were by secret cords, a long way outside the gates," and thus enabled Constantine to defeat Maxentius and his tyranny. God became Constantine's "helper and shield unto salvation."⁴⁹ This God was the one who had been "the Saviour and Protector of the Roman Empire" as well as "the Giver of every good thing."⁵⁰ The fact that God had been actively intervening in Constantine's life, and the manifestation of His power, was evident for Eusebius. Hence, he may have intended to underline these doctrinal thoughts by reiterating the epiphany in Constantine's dream three times, even though it occurred only once.⁵¹

7. Jerome

⁴⁸ *Vita Constantini* 1.27-8; 1.37 (GCS 7.20-1; 7.22; trans. Richardson, 492).

⁴⁹ Ibid. 1.38 (GCS 7.25-6; trans. Richardson, 492-3). Eusebius quotes from Ex 15.2, Septuagint version.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 1.27 (GCS 7.20; trans. Richardson, 489).

⁵¹ *Vita Constantini* 1.27, 29, 32, 38 (GCS 7.20, 21, 22, 25). See also *Historia Ecclesiastica* 9.9-11 (SC 55.60-75).

In both his writings *Epistula* 22.30 and *Apologia contra Rufinum* 1.30, Jerome reported his own dream in which he encountered the Lord who appeared as the Judge. In the dream, Jerome was caught by the Spirit and dragged before the tribunal of the Judge (*tribunal iudicis*). There “the light was so bright, and those who stood around were so radiant.” Asked who and what he was, Jerome replied, “I am a Christian.” However, the Judge exposed his identity as a follower of Cicero, not of Christ. Instantly he became dumb and amid the strokes of the lash (*uerbera*), for the Judge had ordered him to be scourged; Jerome cried out, “Have mercy upon me, O Lord!” The Judge gave him a chance to repent. Jerome then awoke and saw that his “shoulders were black and blue”, the result of the excruciating torture in the dream. He wrote, “I felt the wounds (*plagas*) long after I awoke from my sleep.”⁵²

Jerome’s dream became a holy place where the Lord appeared, and where His divine court was held. It also indicated that the Lord Judge would appear not only in the last days at the moment of the Last Judgment after the Parousia. Rather, He could manifest Himself now in people’s dreams in order to judge them in the present time according to what they had done.

The dream was also the site at which Jerome really saw the Lord, and actually experienced the divine punishment. More precisely, it was through the dream, rather than in the dream, that Jerome really came before the divine and was physically tortured due to his sin. For Jerome, this was more than a dream. Rather, this was a “real” and tangible experience, not merely a spiritual or dreaming one. He therefore proclaimed, “this was no sleep nor idle dream, such as those by which we are often mocked (*nec uero sopor ille fuerat aut uana somnia, quibus saepe deludimur*).”⁵³ To

⁵² *Epistula* 22.30 (CSEL 54.189-91; trans. NPNF 6.35-6); also see *Apologia contra Rufinum* 1.30 (SC 303.80-2). Cf. Natalius’ case reported by Eusebius. *Historia Ecclesiastica*. 5.28.12 (SC 41.76-7).

⁵³ *Epistula* 22.30 (CSEL 54.191; trans. NPNF 6.36).

argue that his dream was not a dream but an actual occurrence experienced by the dreamer seems to be completely paradoxical and inconceivable. However, what happened to Jerome was perhaps beyond what he could describe with the language he commonly used. His argument can be understood in a dialectical way, by which Jerome tried to demonstrate the reality of both the epiphany in his dream and his experience of simultaneously dreaming and being lashed.

Furthermore, a close relation between dreams and Christology emerges from Jerome's dream account. Jerome received the dream when he had been suffering from a deadly disease, and "preparations for his funeral went on." In the dream, he was punished with whipping because of his sin. After he awoke from the dream, he realised that his disease too was a divine punishment.⁵⁴ Jerome's dream projects the divine as a brutal Judge who imposes harsh punishments on people, including deadly diseases and lashing. This divine image completely differs from those in most other patristic dream texts. The Judge was also expected by early Christians to be seen only after the Parousia. More importantly, this divine image seems to be totally negative, although it may urge Christians to repent as soon as possible since the divine punishment may come on them at any moment in this life, rather than in the last days or afterlife.

According to the dream narrative, however, due to the divine punishment through the dream which spurred Jerome to repent immediately, he eventually survived his deadly disease and became a devoted Christian for the rest of his life. In addition, to be punished by being whipped through the dream was much better than to be punished by eternal fire in sheol following the Last Judgment. Hence, for Jerome, the divine punishment was not (only) a penalty. Rather, it was a divine

⁵⁴ Ibid. 22.30 (*CSEL* 54.189-91).

remedy for his disease and also a process of salvation, which successfully led him back to the Lord. In this regard, the divine image could still reflect the Lord and His attributes as merciful and salvific, rather than brutal.

Here again we can observe the reciprocal relationship. The dream (or the dream narrative), on the one hand, enabled the Lord to be visible and His image as the Judge (which was normally assumed to be seen in the Last Judgment) to be revealed in the present. On the other hand, the divine image with the doctrinal teachings it presented endowed Jerome's dream (and his dream narrative) with the divine authority and his life with the divine special guidance. It then reinforced Jerome's dream testimony as well as its credibility and influence.

8. Augustine

Augustine too utilised dream reports and discourses to elucidate the doctrine of God, and in particular to underscore God as the Almighty and the One who cares for humanity. In his *Confessiones*, Augustine related his mother's dream, through which she received the divine comfort and a prophecy (that her child, Augustine, would convert). This was in order not only to confess his previous sinful deeds, but also to sketch the attributes of God. For example, he wrote, "Whence this dream [his mother's dream], unless Thy ears were [inclined] to her heart, O Thou Omnipotent Good, who takest such care of each of us as if he were Thine only care, and of all as of each one (*unde hoc, nisi quia erant aures tuae ad cor eius, o tu bone omnipotens, qui sic curas unumquemque nostrum, tamquam solum cures, et sic omnes, tamquam singulos?*)."⁵⁵ For the purpose of testifying to God's almighty power and His mercy for people, Augustine in his *De Civitate Dei* told two dream testimonies whereby a

⁵⁵ *Confessiones* 3.11.19 (BA 13.400; trans. V.J. Bourke, FC 21.69). Cf. Ps 10:17.

blind and an ill Christian were divinely healed.⁵⁶

Moreover, several church fathers, including Tertullian, believed that the Father was invisible, whereas the Son and the Spirit were visible. In Augustine's time, many Christians began to accept that the Father was not visible except in people's dreams. Augustine, however, went much further than Tertullian and his contemporary Christian fellows. In *De Trinitate*, Augustine argued that the Father, like the Son and the Spirit, could be seen through a human form (or appearance) by people both in their dreams and in their waking states. He remarked,

Or can any one fall headlong into such an error as to dare to say, that the Son and the Holy Spirit are visible also to men who are awake, but that the Father is not visible except to those who dream (*patrem autem non nisi somniantibus*)? ...Or is the Father able to form a bodily likeness to represent himself in the dreams of men asleep, but unable to form an actual bodily creature to represent himself to the eyes of men awake?⁵⁷

For Augustine, God, who was merciful and cared for His people, had unconditionally given His grace to humanity and actively showed His love, power and action to humanity. Hence, God was willing to manifest Himself through a corporeal form or likeness to mortal senses. In Augustine's view, epiphany should signify the appearance of the Son or the Spirit, as well as the Father. It normally took place in dreams, but could also occur in this world.

9. Martin of Tours' Dream

⁵⁶ *De Civitate Dei* 22.8.2; 22.8.4 (BA 37.560; 37.568). Cf. *Confessiones* 9.7.16 (BA 14.98-100); *Sermones* 286; 318 (PL 38.1299; 38.1437-40).

⁵⁷ *De Trinitate* 2.18.34 (BA 15.266; trans. A.W. Haddan, NPNF 3.53).

According to his disciple Sulpicius Severus, when Martin of Tours (bishop of Tours) was still a catechumen, he received a dream in which epiphany occurred. On a severely cold winter day, Martin saw a poor man who was destitute of clothing and had entreated for help but received nothing from people passing by. Martin had nothing except a cloak. He divided his cloak and gave half of it to the poor man. The by-standers laughed because both Martin and the poor man now stood out as partly dressed.⁵⁸

That night the Lord Christ came to Martin in his dream. The Lord was arrayed in the part of Martin's cloak which he had given the poor man. He then said to the multitude of angels standing round with a clear voice, "Martin, who is still but a catechumen, clothed me with this robe (*hac me ueste contextit*).” After this dream, Severus began to name Martin “the sainted man” in his hagiography.⁵⁹

In his exegesis of Jacob's dream (Gen 28:10-22), Severus called “the place of his [Jacob's] dream as sacred (*id locum somnii sacratum*)” and also regarded his dream as a sign of the divine's favour for Jacob.⁶⁰ Likewise, for Severus, Martin's dream not only exhibited itself as a sacred place of divine manifestation, but also proved Martin to be a saint. Moreover, what people, including Martin himself, saw in their waking states on the street was merely the poor man. Yet, it was the dream by which Martin was able to recognise the “real” identity of the poor man as the Lord Christ, and to see His undisguised face.

Severus' ideas of Christology were also interwoven in his dream accounts, and he disseminated this doctrine mostly by depicting the Lord's image. He recounted that Martin in the dream saw the appearance of Christ dressed in his

⁵⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Sancti Martini Turonensis* 3.1-2 (SC 133.256-8).

⁵⁹ Ibid. 3.3-5 (SC 133.258; trans. NPNF 11.5).

⁶⁰ Severus, *Chronicorum* 1.8 (SC 441.106 [column 1.7.4]; trans. NPNF 11.74).

garment. Christ then said to numerous angels that “he himself had been clothed in that poor man; and to confirm the testimony he bore to so good a deed, he condescended to show him himself in that very dress which the poor man had received.”⁶¹

This dream narrative delineated Christ not as the One who is with the poor, rather, Christ was the poor. He was actually the “one” who had received Martin’s almsgiving of half a cloak, and also whom the by-standers rejected and laughed at. For Severus, the image of Christ was not a glorious or exalted Lord, but a humble and condescended one, who was the brother of the poor and the despised. To the haughty, the real identity or appearance of Christ was hidden, whereas to the humble it was unveiled. Because Martin was poor, humble and benevolent, he was able to see and meet Christ in the dream, which disclosed Christ’s true appearance. This image of Christ pictured by Severus in the dream episode had probably never been seen in the previous patristic texts, and therefore is essential for our discovery of the conceptions of Christ in early Christianity.

Christ’s appearance as a poor man may doctrinally indicate that while people are always inclined to be far away from the poor, Christ desires to become one of them. The Lord could understand the pain and suffering of the poor and thus could comfort them because He had been through the same experience. Hence, Christ and the poor were able to identify with each other and recognise each other as siblings through the family likeness, the appearance of the destitute. Where there is a poor man, there can be the presence of Christ because he may be that poor man. Probably, it is only through the appearance of the poor in this world that Christians can see the face of their Lord.

⁶¹ Severus, *Vita Sancti Martini Turonensis* 3.4 (SC 133.258; trans. *NPNF* 11.5).

Conclusion

The nature of dreams in the patristic texts mentioned above can be reckoned as a sacred and unique site where an epiphany is manifested. It seems that, for early Christians, to believe was not enough until it was followed by experience. The divinity they believed in was not impalpable, but the One they could experience and even see or touch. Numerous patristic texts testified to both the happenings of epiphany in their dreams and the experiences in which they encountered their Lord “visually” and “physically.” Dreams offered them not only access to the divine realm, but the opportunity of a tangible contact with the divine. Perpetua, for example, was able to see the Lord while she was still detained in prison. Dreams made her joyfully feel that she was in heaven, rather than in prison.

Early Christians could therefore expect to meet the divine in heaven after death as well as in dreams, which were a phenomenal venue for them to see their Lord and hear His voice face to face while they remained living in this sinful world. At the same time, their Lord seemed to be keen to reveal Himself and to meet them in dreams, just as He had done with Hermas and Perpetua. When epiphany took place in their dreams, the dreams were transformed into a sacred site.

In this respect, dreams can be understood as “a break” (an opening by which passage from heaven to earth is made possible), “the axis mundi” (the place which connects the earthly world and the divine realm)⁶² or the sanctuary. Hence, he who enters the sphere of dreams may enter the sanctuary of life. This may suggest that if the church is the collective sacred place for the community of faith, then dreams can

⁶² For the explanation of these two terms (a break and the axis mundi) in detail, see Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, 20-37.

be the private one for individual believers. Since both places are sacred, the attitude of Christians towards them should be similar.

Besides presenting their oneiric views, the authors of the patristic dream texts chiefly intended to promulgate the doctrine of God and Christology. By narrating or discussing the dreams in which an epiphany unfolded, they expressed directly or indirectly their thoughts about the image of God or Christ, particularly the divine's appearances and attributes. The main reason why dream narratives were developed into a common genre (or a type of "art")⁶³ for early Christian writers to illustrate the divine image was probably because they could portray the appearance of God (the invisible Highest) or Christ (the glorious Savior) creatively and freely, yet still leave space for their readers' (or audiences') imagination. Specifically, it provided a profile of the divine lineaments, but would not give a definite and fixed portrayal, and thus not limit the image of the Wholly Other.

Moreover, in the early Christian community, as dreams became a common place for divinity and humanity to contact each other, dream narratives and discourses were developed into a common way by which early Christian writers spread their perceptions of the attributes of God and Christ. Since the divine image was changeable in dreams, the divine attributes which dream narratives or discourses could display were more diverse, convincing and impressive. The meanings and dimensions which the diverse attributes of the divine could expose then become

⁶³ Medieval and modern Christians have usually represented the image of God or Christ through artistic works, mainly paintings and sculptures, while early Christians often did so through literature, chiefly by the apocalyptic works which contain primarily dream/vision narratives. Few early Christian paintings or sculptures of God or Christ before the rise of the Eastern Roman Empire, particularly before the fourth century, have been found or survive. In fact, prior to the third century there is no surviving art which can be identified as Christian with certainty. See Peter Murray and Linda Murray, *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, reprint, 1998), 148-9. In contrast, early Christian dream/vision narratives about the divine have survived in abundance. Several of them can be surely dated before the third century. They are critical for our investigation of early Christian understandings of God and Christ.

more profound and manifold, and thus met the need of Christians in different situations.

Accordingly, the patristic dream texts can contribute substantially to our comprehensions of the early Christian doctrine of God and Christology. As we have observed, the dream texts characterised God as the Almighty, the Author of the victory of human warfare and also as a patient, congenial, impartial and merciful divinity. They represented Christ as the One who is amiable and even touchable, who yearns to grant humans salvation while judging people sternly or punishing them harshly, and who cares for people, has been with them and even can be one of them, particularly with regard to the poor. They described the relationship of Christians to the divine as communicable and intimate. The divine did not merely reside in the highest, holy heaven. Rather, the divine was in the midst of them, even in their personal dream world.

In terms of their propagational methodology and hermeneutic approach, the authors of the patristic dream texts purposed to illuminate the two dogmas by doctrinalising (or doctrinally explicating) the phenomena of dream epiphany, while they elaborately integrated the doctrines into their explications of dreams. Their views of dreams and their thoughts concerning the doctrines were intertwined and concordant. As the former attended to the latter, the latter undergirded the former. In addition, as their oneiric views along with their doctrinal thoughts concurred with early Christian tenets, their dream texts were more likely to be accepted and adopted as authoritative in the Christian community. Here, we perceive the propagational, hermeneutical and contextually reciprocal relationships between patristic oneirology and dogmatics.

Evidently, dreams and doctrines in patristic writings are “symbiotic” and

interlaced. Patristic oneirology is essentially doctrinal in the context of the church fathers. In this regard, it radically diverges from Greco-Roman or modern oneirology, which primarily serves dream theory or the interpretation of dreams, rather than religious doctrines. Hence, the exploration of patristic views of the nature of divinely-inspired dreams can be fully achieved only by an approach which includes investigation into the early Christian doctrine of God and Christology, and most likely vice versa.

Chapter 6

Dreams as Divine Messages and Their Relation to the Doctrine of Revelation

Not because you are more deserving than all others that it should be revealed to you, for there are others before you and better than you, to whom these visions ought to be revealed.
— *The Shepherd of Hermas. Vision 3.4.3.*

At once I realized that I was privileged to pray for him.... Without delay, on that very night this was shown to me in a vision. — *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis 7.3.*

It was under the inspiration of God that Nabuchodonosor had his famous dream, and the majority of mankind get their knowledge of God from dreams. — Tertullian, *De Anima* 47.2.

And so Joseph, who understood the meaning of the seven ears of corn and the seven kine, was more a prophet than Pharaoh, who saw them in a dream. — Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram* 12.9.20.

In Greco-Roman, Hellenistic Jewish, biblical or patristic literature, divinely-inspired dreams¹ mostly aimed to transmit divine messages to humanity. Message dreams predominated in all dream literature of antiquity. They were utilised by the divine as a language to communicate with humanity. In most cases, dreamers in Greco-Roman

¹ “Divinely-inspired dream(s)” hereafter in this chapter referred to as “dream(s),” unless specifically stated otherwise.

and biblical texts were the only intended audience of oneiric messages. In patristic texts, however, it was not merely dreamers but their congregation, their community, their rivals, and even all the people in the world to whom dream messages were addressed.

Another unique characteristic of message dreams related by early Christian writers is exhibited in their capacity as an agent for the enlightenment of scriptural truth, the endowment of the knowledge of the divine, and the magnification of God's glory and power. A further characteristic is that they took a leading part in the incidents of repentance or conversion of many people in early Christianity. Their messages were life-changing. This salvific efficacy of dreams was barely observed in any oneirology other than patristic.

Moreover, message dreams in patristic texts, unlike those in Greco-Roman, mainly function not for literary or oneirological attempts, but for doctrinal ones. As message dreams had frequently appeared in the early Christian community, they became a popular issue among Christians. In this context, early Christian writers found it appropriate to propose their doctrines of revelation by narrating or discussing these dreams. On the other hand, their doctrines shaped both the pattern of their interpretations of prophetic dreams and the landscape of the activities of revelatory dreams in the early Church. They even constricted the way in which oneirically revelatory messages reached people. In their writings, accordingly, message dreams and the doctrine of revelation were methodologically and hermeneutically interwoven.

The major themes these Christian writers contended with included, who was capable of receiving or interpreting revelatory or prophetic dreams, and to whom were their messages given. Their writings can be classified into two groups based on

their doctrinal disposition. One reflects the belief that everyone, including the plebeian and the pagan, could receive divine revelation, and that divinely revelatory messages could be sent to church leaders by a lay Christian chosen as God's messenger. The other carried the conviction that there was no revelation outside the Church, and that only very few Christians who have been greatly devout or been church leaders could correctly interpret revelatory dreams and be the true messengers of God.

Four texts, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, and Tertullian's and Augustine's dream texts, were consciously selected for analysis in this chapter, as they contain more discourses on this issue and more representative views for these two groups than other patristic texts.² Although the former three texts all belong to the first group, each of them is still carefully examined, taking account of the fact that the backgrounds of their authors differ substantially from one another (one being a sinner, another a laywoman, and the other a theologian, according to the texts).³ Augustine's thoughts should be sufficiently representative of the view of the second group, as no other church father dealt with this issue more ardently and seriously than he did.

In this chapter I argue that the nature of divinely-inspired dreams in these four patristic texts can be considered as divine messages through which God speaks to humans, and which the latter read as God's words. I also demonstrate the relationships of propagational methodology and hermeneutical reciprocity between dreams and the doctrine of revelation in these texts.

² As usual, most of the other unselected dream texts, if relevant, will be briefly discussed or noted in footnotes for reference.

³ Some scholars may argue that *The Shepherd* or *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* was not composed by a single author. But for the convenience of discussion, in this thesis I assume that each text in its final form was created by one "author (writer, redactor or otherwise)".

1. *The Shepherd of Hermas*

The first part of *The Shepherd of Hermas* consists of five dream narratives (*Vision* 1 to 5), each of which conveys divine messages respecting Christian penitence and God's forgiveness. This is also reflected in the text's title *The Shepherd*, which takes its name from a key figure in the book, "the angel of repentance (ὁ ἄγγελος τῆς μετανοίας)", who appears as a shepherd to Hermas.⁴ This dream text chiefly addressed the issue of postbaptismal repentance. Its oneiric messages verify the one and only penance attainable after baptism.⁵

According to the dream text, the angel imparted to Hermas that the Lord had demanded the construction of "the Church" built by angels to be paused, and thus its completion—the end of the world—to be delayed, in order to give Christians a final chance to repent.⁶ Until the day on which Hermas announced the divine warning to people, those who repented wholeheartedly would be forgiven their sins. Thereafter, pardon would no longer be available. Hermas' dream message also declared that repentance was even able to turn the coming persecution into a blessing, owing to its capability of making Christians purified.⁷

In the apocalyptic context, the author of *The Shepherd* characterised dreams as a divine language through which divinity talked to humans and transmitted messages to them. Moreover, this author by dream narratives also articulated some significant beliefs about the doctrine of revelation, particularly about who could be

⁴ *Vision* 5.7 (ed. M.W. Holmes, 502).

⁵ *Ibid.* 2.2.4-5 (ed. Holmes, 464); *Mandate* 4.4.4 (ed. Holmes, 514). For postbaptismal forgiveness, cf. Heb 4:6, 10:26-31; 1 John 1:8-9, 5:16-7. Tertullian disapproved of postbaptismal pardon in his Montanist period, labeling *The Shepherd* "apocrypho Pastore moechorum (apocryphal Shepherd of adulterers)." Tertullian, *De Pudicitia*, 20.2 (CCL 2.1324).

⁶ *Similitude* 9.14.2-3 (ed. Holmes, 648).

⁷ *Vision* 2.2.2-4; 3.2.2; 3.3.3; 3.8.9-11; 4.2.5; 4.3.2-6; 5.6-7 (ed. Holmes, 464; 472; 474; 486; 498; 500; 502)

God's messenger, and who should be his audience.

Firstly, *The Shepherd* begins with a short introduction, describing unequivocally that Hermas, the seer of several revelatory dreams, was a slave rather than a dignitary in either the church or society.⁸ The dream text reveals that he was frequently accused of his sins and was reproached for his folly.⁹ He was also considered unworthy of being God's messenger. The divine figure said to him, "Not because you are more deserving than all others that it should be revealed to you, for there are others before you and better than you, to whom these visions ought to be revealed (Οὐχ ὅτι σὺ ἐκ πάντων ἀξιώτερος εἶ ἵνα σοι ἀποκαλυφθῇ ἄλλοι γάρ σου πρότεροί εἰσιν καὶ βελτίονες σου, οἷς ἔδει ἀποκαλυφθῆναι τὰ ὁράματα ταῦτα)." Yet oneiric visions had been revealed to him for the sake of all Christians, and also for the purpose of glorifying God's name.¹⁰

Obviously, this dream text intimated that divine revelation could be directly divulged even to the one who was a sinner and a fool, and also in the lowest social stratum. In His revelatory missions God does not solely prefer martyrs, the sinless, the reverend or the eminent. Rather, the sinful, the despised, the uneducated and nonentities are all at His disposal. Every Christian, irrespective of status or virtue, could be a divine messenger to the Christian community in order that Christians would be penitent and God extolled.

⁸ Ibid. 1.1.1 (ed. Homles, 454). For discussion of Hermas' identity, see Origen, *Commentarii in Romanos* 10.31 (PG 14.1282), identifying Hermas as the one in Rom 16:14. Cf. *Muratorian Fragment* 73-5 (ed. by Hans Lietzmann); Quasten, *Patrology*, 93; Robert Joly, *Hermas Le Pasteur* (SC 53), 17-21; Jannes Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 20-6; Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 381-2; Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 20-4; 42-3.

⁹ For Hermas as a sinner, see *Vision* 1.1.5; 1.3.1-2; 2.3.1 (ed. Homles, 456; 458-60; 466); as a fool, see *Vision* 3.6.5; 3.8.9; 3.10.9 (ed. Homles, 480; 486; 490); Cf. *Mandate* 10.2.1 (ed. Holmes, 536); *Similitude* 6.4.3; 6.5.2; 9.12.1; 9.14.4 (ed. Holmes, 590; 590; 642; 648).

¹⁰ *Vision* 3.4.3 (ed. and trans. Homles, 476). John Chrysostom wrote that Pilate's wife was more worthy than he to receive dreams from God. *Homiliae in Matthaem* 86.1.19 (PG 57.764).

Secondly, the revelatory messages which Hermas received in dreams concerned not only the transgressions of Hermas and his family, but also the iniquities of those outside and inside the Church. They particularly demanded the penitence of those at the top of the Church. Hermas was required to publicise these messages to Christians everywhere, not merely to his own congregation.

In a dream, the divine censured Hermas for his personal, and also his family's, iniquities. Following this, the divine read to him words about God's glory, power and works to be done. One part of the words were spoken "for the righteous", and the other part "for heathens and apostates."¹¹ In the next dream, the divine enjoined him to write down two books, one sent to Clement¹² and the other to Grapte, a female Christian.¹³ Then the former "will send his to other cities" while the latter "will instruct the widows and orphans." But Hermas "will read it to this city, along with the elders who preside over the church."¹⁴

Having fasted and prayed to the Lord to reveal to him "the revelation which He had promised to show" through the elderly woman, Hermas was granted another dream that very night, in which the elderly woman appeared. She instructed him to read all the divine words she had said "to the ears of the saints, in order that by hearing and doing them [i.e. doing what God requested] they may be cleansed of their wickedness (τά ὧτα τῶν ἁγίων, ἵνα ἀκούσαντες αὐτὰ καὶ ποιήσαντες καθαρισθῶσιν ἀπὸ τῶν πονηριῶν αὐτῶν)."¹⁵ She also commanded him to deliver the messages not only to the dubious (double-minded) in the Christian community, but

¹¹ *Vision* 1.3.1-1.4.2 (ed. Homles, 458-62).

¹² For Clement's identity, see Quasten, *Patrology*, 92; Joly, *Hermas Le Pasteur*, 97, note 5; Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 381; Osiek, *Shepherd*, 59.

¹³ For discussion of Grapte and her role in the early church, see Margaret MacDonald, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 13, 42, 75-6, 92.

¹⁴ *Vision* 2.4.3 (ed. and trans. Homles, 468).

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 3.8.11 (ed. and trans. Homles, 486).

also to “the leaders of the Church and those in the seats of honor (τοῖς προηγούμενοις τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ τοῖς πρωτοκαθεδρίταις).” The revelatory admonishment was given to superiors by Hermas, who was a layman inferior to those leaders, because they themselves had gone astray and been unable to direct their congregations.¹⁶

In the other oneiric vision, the divine message was uttered to “the God’s elect”, who would soon encounter a great tribulation, and again “to the ears of the saints.”¹⁷ The final dream in *The Shepherd* depicted that the angel of repentance, glorious in appearance and dressed like a shepherd, instructed Hermas to write down his commandments and parables, which had to be proclaimed to “every person.”¹⁸

Certainly the addressees of the divine messages in Hermas’ dreams ranged very widely from the dreamer himself to his family, from church leaders to the saints, and from God’s chosen ones to everyone in the world. Yet, the issues and people within the Christian community still captured the core of these messages. As Robin Lane Fox observes, “No Christian visionary was ever more loyal to the Church than Hermas...Hermas saw and heard revelations for the sake of the community through which he had his visionary gifts: no pagan prophet or dreamer had ever worked in such a context.”¹⁹ Miller also notes that Hermas’ dreams function “as a strategy of rhetorical indirection whereby the dreams of individuals are taken to signify inferentially for a whole community.”²⁰

The Shepherd represented the nature of either Hermas’ dreams or their

¹⁶ Ibid. 3.1.1; 3.4.3; 3.9.7-9 (ed. Homles, 468; 476; 488). For the double-minded, cf. Jas 1:8; *1 Clement* 11.2; 23.2-3 (ed. M.W. Holmes, 58; 76-8); *2 Clement* 11.2-5 (ed. Holmes, 150-2); Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 30-1. For the problems of the leaders in Hermas’ community, see Harry Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry as Reflected in the Writings of Hermas, Clement and Ignatius* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1991, new edition, 2002), 61-6.

¹⁷ *Vision* 4.2.5; 4.3.6 (ed. and trans. Homles, 498; 500).

¹⁸ Ibid. 5.5 (ed. Homles, 502); *Similitude* 10.2.3; 10.4.1 (ed. Holmes, 680; 684).

¹⁹ Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 384.

²⁰ Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 137.

revelations as communal. The essence of dreams as extremely personal and private was radically transformed in their revelatory mission or context. As the divine said to Hermas, “it is not for you alone that these revelations have been made to you, but in order that you may show them to all.”²¹ The revelations in this dream text primarily attended not to an individual church or Christian, but to all churches in different cities and all Christians as a whole, including the marginal, disadvantaged (e.g. widows and orphans) and doubtful.

Nevertheless, in this dream text the messages for people in church leadership are especially conspicuous and harsh. They highlighted the fact that the saints, church leaders and those in the seats of honour were not necessarily sinless or admirable. Nor were they to be the true messenger or representative of God in the Church or in the world. Rather, a lay Christian could be. Revelation could be sent to those in a high church position through the lowly. In this case, the superiors ought to heed the advice of an inferior, who bore divine revelation for them.

A reciprocal relationship between dreams and the author’s doctrine in *The Shepherd* can be discerned. On the one hand, his dreams facilitate his teachings about revelation, since dreams are a common revelatory channel in the biblical tradition, while his dream messages define these doctrinal teachings as divine instructions. On the other hand, his doctrinal messages justify not only his dreams as divinely-inspired, but also the identity of (the author or) Hermas, previously a slave and currently not in a church leadership capacity, as a messenger of God. Hence, they enabled him to speak out his (oneiric) messages to his congregation, as well as the entire Christian community.

This oneirological-doctrinal approach proved effective as *The Shepherd*

²¹ *Vision* 3.8.10 (ed. and trans. Homles, 486).

enjoyed enormous popularity in the early Christian community.²² As might be expected, the text's messages could readily win acceptance, at least from lay Christians, though hardly by church authorities (this text was eventually excluded from the canonical books by later church authorities notwithstanding its wide popularity). As it was widely celebrated and spread, so were the doctrinal conceptions of revelation within it. This kind of approach was also adopted by many latter Christian writers on dreams, including the author of the dream text *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*.

2. *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*

At the very beginning of the text, *Passio* pronounced that not only God's people in the ancient time, but also those in the present should witness the occurrence of prophecies, visions and dreams inspired by the Holy Spirit, all of which served as a demonstration of divine power and a proclamation of the glory of God and the Lord Christ to both believers and non-believers.²³ After this pronouncement, the text recounts five dreams, four seen by Perpetua and one by the martyr Saturus. These dreams carried divine messages, mostly for Perpetua, but also partly for the church leaders and people in her community of faith.

Perpetua's first dream appeared in response to her brother's question concerning the necessity of her passion. Through this premonitory dream she received a divine message telling her the meaning of her martyrdom and the result of

²² The text's popularity can be proved by the fact that by the end of the second century it was read by Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses* 4.20.2 [SC 100/2.628]) in Gaul, by Tertullian (*De Oratione* 16.1-2 [CCL 1.266]) in Carthage, by Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* 1.29, 2.1 [SC 30.176; 38.34]) and Origen (*De Principiis* 4.11 [SC 268.312, column 4.2.4]) in Egypt. It was part of the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus. Other readers include Hippolytus, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and Cassian in the West and Eusebius and Athanasius in the East. See Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 4-7.

²³ *Passio* 1.1-6 (SC 417.98-104), in which Joel 2:28 or Acts 2:17-18 was quoted.

the persecution she was confronting. It was by this message that both she and her brother were capable of standing firm without anxiety and “ceased henceforth to have any hope in this world.”²⁴

One of the scenes in her first dream is as follows: Perpetua went up to the heavenly garden through a golden ladder; the Lord welcomed her and gave her a little cheese to eat; she ate and all who were around said “Amen.”²⁵ Many scholars have agreed that this scene is a reflection of the Eucharistic ritual in early Christianity.²⁶ Thomas Heffernan was aware of the importance of the divine message in this scene for Perpetua’s current situation. He argues that at that time Perpetua was a catechumen who “has not yet fully entered into the fellowship (i.e. not having the Eucharist).” It is reasonable to conceive of “this dream as an eschatological prophecy of her full reception into the community by virtue of her martyrdom.”²⁷ That is, the divine message in this dream reassured Perpetua about her status of redemption and fellowship at the first step of her passion.

In her second dream Perpetua saw her long-dead younger brother Dinocrates, who had died horribly of cancer of the face at the age of seven, coming out of a

²⁴ *Passio* 4.10 (SC 417.118; trans. ANF 3.700). Cf. Polycarp’s dream before his martyrdom, see *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 5.2 (ed. M.W. Holmes, 310); Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.15.10 (SC 31.183); also see Cyprian’s nightly vision reported by Pontius, *Vita Cypriani* 12-4 (CSEL 3/3.102-6).

²⁵ *Passio* 4.9 (SC 417.116).

²⁶ Although some scholars, including Eric Dodds and Peter Dronke, disagree with this view, Thomas Heffernan has convincingly demonstrated the close correlation between this scene and the liturgical ceremonies in the early Church, which were described in the writings of Tertullian (*Apologeticum* 39 [CCL 1.150-3] and *De Corona* 3.3 [CCL 2.1042-3]) and Hippolytus (*Church Order* [ed. G. Dix, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 43-60]). He observes that “the *agape* meal [a Christian practice held in the Carthaginian community] of fellowship was an evening meal at which the initiates offered a prayer recited while standing before a meal, including milk and cheese, was eaten.” Also, the initiates at their first communion were given a cup full of milk and honey as “a foretaste of the heavenly sweetness.” Thomas Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, 209-10. Eric Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge: University Press, 1965, reprint, 2001), 51-2; Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, reprint, 1996), 9.

²⁷ Heffernan also argues that owing to the foretold promise of her redemption in this dream, Perpetua could now exercise traditional gifts associated with martyrs: the power to forgive sins and to restore people to salvation, as reflected in all other dreams of *Passio*. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, 210.

gloomy place where there were many others. He was parched and very thirsty, with a filthy, pallid colour countenance and the wound on his face which he had when he died. “Where Dinocrates stood there was a pool full of water, and its rim was higher than the child’s height,” so that he could not drink. After knowing his current situation by this dream, Perpetua prayed for him every day, and believed that her prayer would mitigate his suffering. A few days later, she learned through a message in another dream that the condition of Dinocrates had greatly improved. Owing to the efficacy of her intercession by prayer, he was now clean, well dressed and refreshed. Even the dark place turned bright and “that pool had its rim lowered to the level of the child’s waist.” He began to play as children do.²⁸

It was through the divine messages in the second and third dream that Perpetua realised that she, as a martyr, had acquired a special patronal relationship with the Lord, and also a privilege that made her capable of making supplication to Him on behalf of others, including the deceased. Thus she could bring divine mercy to them through her intercession, which could even ameliorate the dead’s suffering in the place outside this world.²⁹ She now understood that her suffering and martyrdom would benefit not only herself, but also others. It was also through these two dreams that the state of the dead boy was witnessed by the living (probably for the first time in Church history), and then comprehended by church fathers through Perpetua’s dream diary. Augustine even appropriated the accounts of these two dreams for his argument regarding the afterlife.³⁰

Perpetua’s fourth dream came on the day before her execution, foretelling

²⁸ *Passio* 7.1-8.4 (SC 417.126-32; quotation from 7.7 and 8.2; trans. H. Musurillo, 115 and 117).

²⁹ Supplication for the dead, see 2 Macc 12:42. Cyprian refuted this idea in his *Epistula* 55.29 (CCL 3B.293-4; ANF 5 column 51.29); R. Wallis, *The Passion of the Holy Martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas* (ANF 3), 701, note 14. For the martyr’s privilege of advising people by dreams, see Augustine, *De Cura pro Mortuis Gerenda* 17.21 (BA 2.514-8).

³⁰ Augustine, *De Natura et Origine Animae* 1.10.12; 2.10.14 (BA 22.398; 22.490).

that she was actually going to fight with the devil, rather than a beast, at the amphitheater, and that the devout deacon Pomponius and several handsome young men would be there as her seconds and assistants. Also due to divine messages in this dream, she knew that she would have strength to withstand the forthcoming ordeal and to fight with the devil, triumph over him, and then receive the prize for her victory from the Lord.³¹

The final dream in *Passio* was sent to Saturus, but its message was actually intended for Perpetua, her church leaders, and their congregation. It disclosed the Lord's displeasure both with dissension between her bishop and presbyter, and with factious quarrels among people in their church. Through it, the Lord commanded them to repent, to forgive one another and to bring peace into their assembly. Also through this dream message Perpetua not only discovered that her status in the heavenly realm surpassed that of her present bishop (Optatus), but she also foresaw the impending fulfillment of the Lord's promise to her and the place she would enjoy after martyrdom. After this dream, everything was bright and clear to her. She was therefore fully prepared for martyrdom and ready to be with the Lord blissfully.³²

Patently, dreams and their messages took an essential part in her final days, her zeal and her passion. They even radically converted the afterlife of her dead brother. Without them, Perpetua may have known neither the dead sibling's state nor her power to intercede for others. Through them, early Christian conceptions of the capacity of martyrs, the realm of the divine, and the posthumous state of those who had died at a very young age (and probably also had been in the unbaptised status quo) were bequeathed to later church fathers. They may have profoundly influenced

³¹ *Passio* 10.1-15 (SC 417.134-42).

³² *Passio* 11-13 (SC 417.142-52). For a dream which indicated dissension among people in the Church, cf. Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.5 (SC 495.266-70).

the development of the doctrine of Purgatory, as well as the intercessory prerogative of martyrs in early Christianity.³³

The author of *Passio* presupposed dreams as a language through which the divine spoke with Perpetua, revealing things which she desired to know, and part of which people in her church must do. The more messages she received from dreams, the more positively and clearly she saw her faith and life from the divine perspective. They rendered divine answers, promise and strength to her. She therefore could undergo her passion without anxiety or fear, but with fortitude and exhilaration. In this regard, it was dreams and their messages that powerfully orientated Perpetua's saintly life and eventually made her an eminent martyr and an exemplar of faith in the early Church.³⁴

Furthermore, *Passio*, like *The Shepherd*, explicitly displayed its author's beliefs about the doctrine of revelation, the beliefs in which a laywoman could be heavenly ordained as a messenger of divine revelation³⁵, and by which the author justified this dream text as divinely-inspired. The dream text commences with the portrayal of Perpetua: she, while being arrested for her faith, was only a young catechumen (about twenty-two years of age).³⁶ Shortly afterward, she was baptised in the state of detention. A few days later, she saw a divine revelation in her dream for the first time, when she had never had the Eucharist.³⁷

³³ Le Goff observes that Perpetua's dreams offer a first glimpse of what would later become Purgatory. *L'imaginaire Médiéval*, 284; for explication, see his *La Naissance du Purgatoire* (Paris, Gallimard, 1982), chapter 1-2.

³⁴ Without the divine messages, especially those in her first dream, Perpetua's life might have been completely different from that which we know now, as she might have been persuaded not to be a martyr by her father or brother for the sake of her child and family.

³⁵ For a laywoman who received divine messages through dreams, see *The Acts of Xanthippe, Polyxena, and Rebecca* 22 (ANF 9.212); Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.19 (SC 418.164-6), mentioning a dream of Emperor Constantine's sister.

³⁶ *Passio* 2.3 (SC 417.106).

³⁷ Ibid. 3.5-4.10 (SC 417.108-18). Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, 209-10.

In other words, at that moment Perpetua was not yet a Christian in the liturgical sense (because it was her reception of the Eucharist which completed her initiation ceremony)³⁸ and still ritually in a “liminal” state.³⁹ On the one hand, she was converted and had become a believer; on the other hand, she had not participated in Holy Communion, and thus had not fully attained the discipleship of Christ or the membership of the Church.

However, despite being a female and a new adherent who had never communed and was yet not a Christian, Perpetua was chosen by the divine as a recipient of revelation and a messenger of God.⁴⁰ She was even privileged to converse with the Lord (*fabulari cum Domino*) and to demand a dream message (including a message answering only her personal question) from the divine, taking the initiative in provoking revelation.⁴¹ In this sense, God seems to consider neither one’s ritual completion nor the length of being a Christian as the prerequisite for one to be a candidate for His spokesperson.

Passio, like *The Shepherd*, testifies that not only church leaders, but all believers, including initiates, could receive divine revelation through dreams, visions or the like.⁴² In fact, it was actually the other way round: in this dream text (again like in *The Shepherd*) the church leaders were those who had debased themselves and

³⁸ For the role of the reception of the Eucharist in the rite of early Christian initiation, see Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the R.C.I.A.* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994, reprint, 2006), 40-54. For early Christian initiation, see Maxwell Johnson, *The Rites of Christian initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville: Order of Saint Benedict, 1999, reprint, 2007), 41-200.

³⁹ For discussion of the liminal state in a ritual sense, see Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge, 1960), 11 and 21 particularly; Victor Turner, “Variations on a Theme of Liminality,” in *Secular Ritual*, eds. by Sally Falk Moore (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1977), 36-52.

⁴⁰ Even if Perpetua’s first dream symbolically confirmed her full reception of the Eucharist, her completion consummation of initiation rite and thus her identity as a Christian (as argued by Heffernan and mentioned above), she was not yet a Christian when she received oneiric revelation. That is, this dream appeared (or was given) first, and then she partook the heavenly Eucharist in this dream.

⁴¹ *Passio* 4.1-2; 7.1-3 (SC 417.112; 417.126).

⁴² *Ibid.* 1.1-6 (SC 417.98-104).

thus to whom the divine admonition was given; meanwhile the one who was a new adherent with no ecclesiastic experience became a lofty messenger of God.⁴³

With regard to the target audience of revelation, divine dream messages in *Passio*, unlike those in *The Shepherd*, concerned mostly personal issues. Only about one-third of Saturus' dream—the very final part of the entire dream narrative in *Passio*—was germane to the matters of people other than the dreamers themselves. In this dream text, the disposition of revelation at the first place is less communal. In fact, only one message (actually, merely one sentence) in all the dream revelations of *Passio* was relayed literally and directly for a group of people, rather than an individual.

This one-sentence message appeared in Saturus' dream (the final dream in *Passio*) and was spoken by several angels simultaneously to Optatus, Perpetua's bishop. The angels said to him, "Rebuke your flock, because they approach you as if returning from the circus, contending about factious matters (*Corrige plebem tuam, quia sic ad te conueniunt quasi de circo redeuntes et de factionibus certantes*)."⁴⁴ This angelic denunciation of the bishop's congregation was contextually associated with the previous one in the same paragraph, which deplored the discord between him and Aspasius. The angelic solution to both cases of the conflicts among Christians was the same: "Forgive one another and settle whatever disputes you have among yourselves," applied to that of his people.⁴⁵

But how could the author of this text justify its divine authority and proclaim the generality of its messages, or their relevancy to all churches, since, according to the text itself, most of its content was written by Perpetua, a young lady and new

⁴³ Ibid. 13.1-8 (SC 417.150-2).

⁴⁴ Ibid. 13:6 (SC 417.152; trans. ANF 3.703).

⁴⁵ Ibid. 13:5 (SC 417.152; trans. Musurillo, 123).

believer, and since most of its dream messages pertained to personal matters rather than communal. Here, the final portion of the whole dream narrative— the one-third of Satorius' dream— plays a critical role in the authorisation and propagation of the text itself. Eric Dodds even remarks that Satorius' dream narrative "may in fact have been designed as a counterweight to Perpetua's unorthodoxy."⁴⁶ Indeed, if this portion's description of the problems in Perpetua's (or Optatus') church corresponded to those in many other churches (i.e. the contention between church leaders and the conflict over factional issues among Christians), and if the solution to these problems provided by the dream (i.e. forgive one another) was feasible and accordant to biblical teachings,⁴⁷ then the text itself would more likely be embraced within the Christian community.

More importantly, this portion reflected a conviction about revelation whereby the divine could use a newly initiated laywoman with the lowest status in the Church to dispatch messages to a bishop with the highest ecclesiastical status, and also to his congregation. This conviction was also presented by *The Shepherd*, and availed the dream text itself in its circulation. The illustration of this conviction climaxed in a scene of Satorius' dream, in which the bishop Optatus and the presbyter Aspasius cast themselves at Perpetua's feet and requested aid from her. Perpetua said to them, "Are you not our bishop, and are you not our presbyter? How can you fall at our feet?" At the end of this scene, the bishop and the presbyter were kept outside the doors of heaven while Perpetua and Satorius joyfully met other martyrs inside.⁴⁸ This scene strikingly accentuated the reverse order between clergy and laity. It signaled that the divine may employ a new believer to advise church leaders. As Timothy

⁴⁶ Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, 49, note 2.

⁴⁷ Such as Col 3:13; Matt 18:21-35; Luke 11:4.

⁴⁸ *Passio* 13.1-8 (SC 417.150-2; quotation from 13.3; trans. Musurillo, 123).

Barnes points out, “his [Saturus’] dream manifests a subversive attitude towards the clergy.”⁴⁹

To a certain extent, this conviction affirmed Perpetua (or the author of the dream text) to be God’s messenger for bishop Optatus’ congregation, as well as for all believers in the Church, as indicated in the introduction of *Passio*.⁵⁰ It also justified this dream text as divinely inspired and endows it with divine authority. The author seemed deliberately to deposit this portion in the concluding part of the entire dream narrative, where it functions for the purposes of both the exaltation and circulation of the text.

We can also perceive the reciprocally propagational relationship between dreams and the doctrine of revelation in *Passio*. The doctrinal expression ordained Perpetua as God’s messenger, and vindicated the dream text as divine words, while the text promulgates the doctrine. This oneirological-doctrinal strategy of revelation and propagation closely parallels that of *The Shepherd*. The success of this strategy can be attested to by the fact that *Passio* was not only widely celebrated from the third century and esteemed as if it were Scripture, but also publicly read aloud to the assemblies in churches, at least annually on Perpetua’s commemoration (March 7), both in the East as well as in the West.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Barnes, *Tertullian*, 78.

⁵⁰ *Passio* 1.1-6 (SC 417.98-104).

⁵¹ Because *Passio* had been highly regarded as a divine inspired text, Augustine had to warn people that it was not canonical. However, he himself used its dream messages as authoritatively doctrinal teachings to support his theological position. Augustine, *De Natura et Origine Animae* 2.10.14; 4.18.26-8 (BA 22.490; 22.632-40); *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 47.13 (CCL 38.548 [NPNF 8, column 48.12]); *Sermones* 280.1-4; 281.1-2; 394 (PL 38:1281-2; 38:1284; 39:1715). Tertullian considered the oneiric messages in *Passio* as divinely inspired words. He called Perpetua’s dream “the revelation (*revelatione*)” and cited its content as divine messages to support his contention. *De Anima* 55.4 (ed. J.H. Waszink, 74). Also see Kraemer and Lander, “Perpetua and Felicitas,” 1048, 53, 63; Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, 193. Butler’s *Lives of the Saints*, 1:498. For the popularity and influence of *Passio*, see Salisbury, *Perpetua’s Passion*, 166-79. Musurillo asserts that *Passio* is “the archetype of all later Acts of the Christian martyrs.” Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972, reprint, 2000), xxv.

3. Tertullian

Tertullian regarded dreams as a common means through which the divine transmitted messages and knowledge to humanity. The most well-known remark in his oneirology is that “the majority of mankind get their knowledge of God from dreams (*maior paene vis hominum ex visionibus deum discunt*).”⁵² He also wrote, “It would not be unlikely that a man might be warned or frightened by God, as by a bolt of lightning or a sudden stroke of death, but it would be much more natural to think that such a warning would come in a dream.”⁵³ To Tertullian, divine admonition was more reasonably or commonly given by (or in) dreams. A bolt of lightning may be effective in terrifying people, but could neither express the purpose of frightening them, nor direct them towards the right path. Yet dreams could remedy this deficiency. They could form an oneiric place (or scenario) where a man could experience a sudden stroke with such real feeling, and where divine warning and guiding messages were spoken to him.

In his *De Virginibus Velandis*, Tertullian provided an example of divine admonishment through dreams. There was a sister in his congregation who violated the rule of veiling, probably by having her neck uncovered. In his view, her act “was tantamount to advertising her sexual availability.”⁵⁴ Thereafter, in a dream, the angel

⁵² *De Anima* 47.2 (ed. Waszink, 65; trans. E.A. Quain, *FC* 10.285). For non-believers knowing God by means of dreams, see Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.46 (*SC* 132.196) and 1.48 (“in dreams many people form images in their minds, some of divine things,…” *SC* 132.200; trans. H. Chadwick, 43-4). Cf. Gregory of Neocaesarea, *Oratio Proshonetica ac Panegyrica in Origenem* 16 (*PG* 10.1096-1100); Synesius of Cyrene, *De Insomniis* 3 (*PG* 66.1288-9).

⁵³ *De Anima* 44.3 (ed. Waszink, 61; trans. Quain, 279-80). Divine warning by dreams, see *De Idololatria* 9 (*CCL* 2.1107-9). Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.66 (*SC* 132.258-64); Cyprian, *Epistula* 16.4; 39.1 (*CCL* 3B.94; 3B.186; *ANF* 5 column 9.4; 33.1); Jerome, *Epistula* 22.30 (*CSEL* 54.189-91) and *Apologia contra Rufinum* 1.30 (*SC* 303.80-2); Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Sancti Martini Turonensis* 5 (*SC* 133.262-4); Socrates Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.26 (*SC* 505.114); Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.30 (*SC* 495.408-12).

⁵⁴ Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 67.

of the Lord beat her neck and sarcastically reprimanded her for exposing herself, saying that “it is good for you to unveil yourself completely from head to loins, lest that freedom of the neck not be beneficial to you.” Tertullian declared this dream to be a divine message concerning the issue of the veil. He also proclaimed that the Lord spoke this oneiric message, not merely to this sister alone, but to all women in the Church, although it was contextually and literally for this sister only.⁵⁵ A message dream of an individual was then polemically manipulated as a divine instruction for the whole community.

Moreover, dreams were interpreted by Tertullian in order to enunciate his doctrine of revelation. Waszink has observed that as an adherent of Montanism, Tertullian was particularly interested in dreams, as he regarded them “as an indication of the new time which has now come, the time of perfect revelation.”⁵⁶ His doctrinal thoughts on the relationship between dreams and revelation arose mostly from within his discourse on the issue of prophetic dreams, in which he was mainly concerned with the source of revelatory dreams, the people who could receive them, and the way through which they were delivered.

One of the motivations which triggered Tertullian’s discourse was Epicurus’ philosophy. According to Tertullian, Epicurus claimed that “all dreams are vain and meaningless” as he believed that “gods are not interested in men,” and “there is no intelligent government of the world.” Hence, everything in the world happened by chance. In response, Tertullian proclaimed that “some dreams should turn out to be

⁵⁵ *De Virginibus Velandis* 17.3 (CCL 2.1226; trans. G.D. Dunn, 161). For analysis of this woman in the religious milieu of Carthage and Tertullian’s use of her dream, see Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 66-7; Dunn, *Tertullian*, 186, note 139. Jerome also narrated a female Christian’s dream in which an angel chided her for her improper manner. Jerome, *Epistula* 107.5 (CSEL 55.296).

⁵⁶ Waszink, *Tertulliani*, 502. Vincent of Lérins condemned Tertullian’s view, and criticised that Tertullian asserted “the novel furies of Montanus which arose in the Church, and those mad dreams of new doctrine dreamed by mad women, to be true prophecies.” Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium* 18.24 (ed. R. S. Moxon, 77-8; trans. C.A. Heurtley, *NPNF* 11.145 [column 18.46]).

true” (here, “true dreams” denotes the dreams whose content would come true in the future).⁵⁷ In order to mortify Epicurus, Tertullian then recounted fourteen remarkable prophetic dreams in ancient Greco-Roman literature.⁵⁸ After these dream reports, he remarked,

In sleep revelations are made of high honors and eminent talents; remedies are also discovered,⁵⁹ thefts brought to light, and treasures indicated (*Revelantur et honores et ingenia per quietem, praestantur et medellae, produntur et furta, conferuntur et thesauri*)....The whole of world literature testifies to prophetic dreams,....Among all the means of foretelling the future, dreams are awarded the first place by Epicharmus and by Philochorus the Athenian....It is a favorite doctrine of the Stoics that God in His providence over human affairs gave us dreams; among the many other helps to the preservation of the arts and techniques of divination, he especially intended dreams to be of particular assistance to natural foresight.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *De Anima* 46.2 (ed. Waszink, 63; trans. Quain, 282). Epicurus said, “Dreams have no divine character nor any prophetic force, but they originate from the influx of images.” “Prophecy does not exist.” See *Fragment* 24 (Vatican Collection) and 3 (Remains Assigned to Certain Books), ed. and trans. by W. J. Oates, *The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers* (N.Y.: Modern Library, 1957), 41 and 45. For Epicurus’ view of dreams, also see *Fragment* 325-8 (ed. by Hermann Usener, *Epicurea* [Lipsiae: Teubner, 1887], 224-5). Cicero remarked, “There is no divine power which creates dreams...none of the visions seen in dreams have their origin in the will of the gods.” *De Divinatione* 2.60.124 (ed. and trans. LCL 154.510); also see 1.29.61-30.65; 1.44.99 (LCL 154.292-4; 154.328-30). For Epicurus’ notion of gods, see his *Letter to Menoeceus* (ed. Usener, *Epicurea*, 59-66). Cf. Epictetus, *Discourses of Epictetus* 4.7 (ed. and trans. W. J. Oates, 437-8); Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 47.6 (CCL 1.163-4); Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 19.8 (ed. B. Kytzler, 17).

⁵⁸ *De Anima* 46.4-9 (ed. Waszink, 63-4). The fourteen prophetic dreams Tertullian recounted can be classified into five types: 1) the dreams announcing future supreme power, such as the dream of Astyages (king of the Median Empire) about Cyrus, the dream of Philip of Macedon (the father of Alexander the Great) about Alexander, the dream Laodice of Macedonia (the mother of Seleucus I Nicator, founder of the Seleucid dynasty) about Seleucus, the dream of Mithridates I of Pontus (founder of the kingdom of Pontus in Anatolia) about his possession of Pontus, the dream of Baraliris the Illyrian (an Illyrian king and founder of Bardyllis Dynasty) about his dominion from the Molossi to the frontiers of Macedon, and the dream of Cicero about Julius Octavius; 2) the dreams warning against perils, such as the dream of Artorius about Cesar and the dream of the daughter of Polycrates of Samos (the tyrant of Samos) about Polycrates; 3) the dreams foretelling future fame and prosperity, such as the dream of Cicero’s nurse about Cicero and the dream of Socrates about Plato; 4) the dreams which healed people, such as the dream of Leonymus the boxer; 5) the dreams indicating treasures, such as the dream of Sophocles the tragedian about the golden crown of Athens and the dream of Neoptolemus the tragedian about an ancient treasure of gold on the shores of Troy. For Tertullian’s sources of these dreams, see Waszink, *Tertulliani*, 487-98.

⁵⁹ Cf. Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 4.22 (ed. Pack, 255-8).

⁶⁰ *De Anima* 46.9-11 (ed. Waszink, 64; trans. Holmes, *ANF* 3.225 and Quain, *FC* 10.284). Cf.

For Tertullian, divine revelation did not necessarily serve simply for the formation of Scripture, for the manifestation of biblical teachings, or for the benefit of Christian communities. Rather, it could advantage pagans as well, from an individual to a kingdom, such as by unveiling one's future supreme power (e.g. the dream of Cicero)⁶¹ or the fate of an empire (e.g. the dream of Baralaris the Illyrian), exposing hidden personal iniquity (e.g. the dream of a woman of Himera) or national valuables (e.g. the dream of Neoptolemus), and even healing the ailing (e.g. the dream of Leonymus the boxer) and saving a king from immediate peril (e.g. the dream of Artorius, the doctor of Caesar).

Tertullian assented to the Stoic idea that among all means of sending prophecy, dreams held special favour with God, who employed them as a chief agent in His revelatory enterprise. However, he went further than the Stoics, and condemned almost all other means. He added, "As for all other oracles, where no dreams are involved, they must be the results of diabolical possession of the person in question."⁶² He appraised dreams virtually as the only legitimate way by which divinely prognostic messages were relayed. Despite the fact that many oracles, which were given by means other than dreams, may come true, he considered them to be totally demon-inspired. In this respect, the key to discerning a true revelation depended on the way it was delivered, rather than the truth it held or the prediction it fulfilled.

Adversus Marcionem 2.25; 5.6 (CCL 1.503-4; 1.678-81); Cicero, *De Divinatione* 1.33.72 (LCL 154.302-4). For Epicharmus, Philochorus and the Stoics, see Waszink, *Tertulliani*, 496-7.

⁶¹ Theodoret of Cyrhus also recounted a remarkable dream which foreshadowed the future supreme power of the dreamer (Theodosius, who later become an emperor). *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.6-7 (SC 530.350-4).

⁶² *De Anima* 46.12 (ed. Waszink, 65; trans. Quain, 284). On the other hand, Isidore of Seville noted that God may use oracles, in which no dreams are involved, to indicate future events. *Etymologiarum* 11.3.4-6 (PL 82.419-20).

In addition, although he largely assimilated Greco-Roman philosophical or oneirological conceptions into his doctrine of revelation, Tertullian did not adopt them completely without exception. For example, he refuted the belief that prophetic dreams could be invoked by divination, incubation or other magic arts. He said, “Superstition demands that a fast be imposed on those consulting an incubation-oracle (*oracula incubaturis*), so as to achieve the proper degree of ritual purity.”⁶³ The distinction between superstition and revelation lay in whether or not a ritual or magic practice played a part in the course of gaining prophetic dreams. The obtainment of these dreams might require faith, but never rites.

But why did Tertullian (in Chapter 46 of *De Anima*) identify these famous pagan dreams as divinely-inspired, rather than demon-inspired or superstitious, since his identification would allude to the divine being in favour of pagans who could receive revelation directly from God too? This is because he attempted to controvert Epicurus’ idea (mentioned in the beginning of Chapter 46) that no god was ruling this human world or had anything to do with dreams, which were altogether futile. By relating illustrious Greco-Roman prophetic dreams, he proved that true dreams existed abundantly. These dreams were so exceptional, and predicted things so correctly, that they could never occur merely by chance. They could be reasonably explained only in terms of divine prescience and revelation. Additionally, by interpreting these ancient dreams as sent by the Christian God, Tertullian attested to the fact that everything, including every true dream, had taken place under the providence and intervention of God. These dreams corroborated the fact that the

⁶³ *De Anima* 48.3 (ed. Waszink, 66; trans. Quain, 287). For pagan ritual purification by means of fasting, cf. *De Ieiunio Adversus Psychicos* 2 (CCL 2.1258-9). For Daniel’s fast and his divine inspiration of interpreting dreams, cf. *De Ieiunio Adversus Psychicos* 7 and 9-10 (CCL 2.1263-4 and 2.1265-9). For study of dream incubation practiced by pagans and Christians, see Ludwig Deubner, *De Incubatione, Capita Quattuor* (Lipsiae: Teubneri, 1900) and Mary Hamilton, *Incubation, or the Cure of Disease in the Pagan Temples and Christian Churches* (London: Henderson, 1906).

Christian God had been “everywhere present, everywhere dominant (*ubique praesentem, ubique dominantem*)” and always governed this world as well as all humanity.⁶⁴

Unequivocally, in Tertullian’s doctrine of revelation, God passes messages by dreams to Christians as well as pagans without partiality. In his dream texts he reiterated the biblical teaching that God “has promised to pour out the grace of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh and has ordained that His servants and handmaidens shall utter prophecies and dream dreams.” He continued:

Such dreams may be compared to the grace of God as being honest, holy, prophetic, inspired, edifying, and inducing to virtue. Their bountiful nature causes them to overflow even to the infidels since God with divine impartiality causes the rain to fall and the sun to shine upon just and unjust alike.. Surely, it was under the inspiration of God that Nebuchadnezzar had his famous dreams, and the majority of mankind get their knowledge of God from dreams. Therefore, as the mercy of God abounds for the pagans,....⁶⁵

Since dreams could guide people to be virtuous and inspire them to know God, Tertullian saw no reason to preclude God from granting them to both believers and heathens. He concluded that “[we] believe dreams come from God. Why could not God make the Atlantes dream? There is now no race of men completely ignorant of Him, since the light of the Gospel now gleams in every land and to all the ends of the earth.”⁶⁶ Obviously in his theory all were equal before revelation and were

⁶⁴ *Ad Nationes* 2.2; 2.8 (CCL 1.42-44; 1.53-4). Cf. Lactantius, *De Opificio Dei* 18 (CSEL 27/1.58-9): true dreams are sent by Christian God.

⁶⁵ *De Anima* 47.2 (ed. Waszink, 65; trans. Quain, 285-6). See *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 63 (CCL 2.1011-2); *Adversus Marcionem* 5.4; 5.8; 5.11; 5.17 (CCL 1.671-5; 1.685-8; 1.712-6). Cf. Joel 2:28-9; Acts 2:17; Matt 5.45; Dan 2.1-49; Rom 1:19-20. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.46; 1.48 (SC 132.194-8; 200-8).

⁶⁶ *De Anima* 49.3 (ed. Waszink, 67; trans. Quain, 288). Cf. *De Fuga in Persecutione* 6 (CCL

entitled without any discrimination to receive it, even though it was nearly a paradigm that in ancient literature, prophetic dreams and their messages were always given or related only to eminent kings, royal families, philosophers, heroes or the like, instead of ordinary people.⁶⁷

Tertullian, an advocate of New Prophecy, stood for the universal nature of divine revelation.⁶⁸ His doctrine of revelation rendered every one, regardless of religion, race, gender or age, capable of receiving revelation from the divine through dreams. It hermeneutically deconstructed the chasm between Christians and pagans and built a communicative and interactive bridge between them. It doctrinally resolved the differences among people caused by religious disposition, and also consolidated two previously segregated communities into one by (and in) the revelatory capacity. In his doctrinalised dream interpretation, even a pagan king who was a deadly enemy of God's people, brutally killing or capturing them, could receive messages from God through dreams without believing (and perhaps without knowing) Him.⁶⁹

2.1142-4); *Adversus Judaeos* 14.11-4 (CCL 2.1395-6). See Herodotus, *Historiae* 4.184 (the Atlantes "never eat any living thing, and never dream either." ed. H. Rosén, Vol. I, 448); Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* 5.8.45 ("when they [the Atlantes] are asleep they do not have dreams like the rest of mankind." ed. and trans. H. Rackham, LCL 352.250).

⁶⁷ The fourteen prophetic dreams, which Tertullian related in *De Anima* 46.4-9 (ed. Waszink, 63-4), all accord with this paradigm. For examples of this paradigm, see Herodotus' *Historiae* (such as 1.34, 36, 38-40, 43, 107-108, 120-121, 209-201; 2.139-141, 151; 3.30, 64-65, 124-125, 149; 5.55-56, 62; 6.107-108, 118; 7.12-19; 8.54 [ed. Rosén, Vol. I, 23, 24, 25-6, 27, 72-3, 80-2, 131-3; Vol. I, 226-8, 234-5; Vol. I, 272, 294-6, 331-2, 347; Vol. II, 33-4, 36-7; Vol. II, 138-9, 145; Vol. II, 175-81; Vol. II, 329-30]); also see the dreams mentioned in Appendix A to C of this thesis. Dodds observes that "in monarchical societies, the privileged dreamers [of divine dreams] are usually kings (an idea which appears also in the *Iliad*)." E. R. Dodds, *Greek and the Irrational* (CA: University of California Press, 1968, reprint, 1997), 109.

⁶⁸ For Tertullian's advocacy of New Prophecy, see *Adversus Marcionem* 3.24; 4.22 (CCL 1.541-4; 1.600-4); *Adversus Praxeam* 30 (CCL 2.1203-4); *De Anima* 9 (ed. Waszink, 10-2); *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 63 (CCL 2.1011-2). For discussion, see Barnes, *Tertullian*, 42-48; Nasrallah, "An Ecstasy of Folly", 99-101; C. M. Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage* (Cleveland,: Pilgrim Press, 1992), 110-27.

⁶⁹ Cf. (Pseudo-) Clement of Rome, *Homiliae* 17.15-17 (GCS 42.237-9), asserting that even impious men, such as the Pharaoh and King Nebuchadnezzar, can receive true dreams from God; also see Gen 41:1-57; Dan 2:1-49.

Likewise, many Christians might presume that only the Church could monopolise and enjoy the prerogative to acquire true knowledge about God. But by this doctrine, Tertullian emphasised the universal availability of this knowledge, which could be given to pagans through dreams without a Christian as its missionary. His doctrine fundamentally transformed dreams in the dark night into a major source for this knowledge and a light of the Gospel, enlightening and evangelising people in every land. It therefore demanded the conversion of all humanity, including those who had never met a Christian. Taking it a step further, it may arrive at universalism (universal salvation). Here, oneirology, the doctrine of revelation, and soteriology were aptly integrated.

Up to this point, we can again detect a hermeneutically reciprocal relationship in Tertullian's writings. On the one hand, the doctrine of oneiric revelation undergirds God's omniscience and sovereign domination over all things. On the other hand, the latter two theological notions together lay the indispensable foundation for the establishment of the former doctrine. In order to promote these two theological notions, all mantic dreams in pagan literature, which existed long before the emergence of Christianity, were inclusively recognised by Tertullian as inspired by the Christian God, who manipulated every crucial event of human history, particularly the events in which a revelatory dream was involved. At the same time, in order to defend this doctrine, pagans could gain divine favour in the realm of either revelation (which is universally available to all) or dreams, while Christian predominance and exclusively privileged status could be compromised.

4. Augustine

Augustine's writings hold many dream accounts of his contemporaries. Those

accounts document the early Christian belief that dreams could bring divine messages to humans. In both *De Civitate Dei* and *Confessiones*, Augustine reported the dream of Bishop Ambrose, through which he received critical information from God. The relics of the martyrs Protasius and Gervasius had been lost, and no one knew where they were until the hidden place was revealed to Ambrose through a dream. Thereupon, Ambrose went and found the relics, which were then transferred to his basilica. The relics restrained the fury of a lady of royal family, and healed some people vexed by impure spirits, even making the very demons themselves public confessors. A man who had been blind for a long time and was well known in the city heard the news and asked his guide to lead him there. When he touched with his cloth the bier, on which lay the saints, and applied the cloth to his eyes, they were immediately opened. All these miracles commenced with Ambrose's message dream and took place at Milan when the emperor and Augustine were there. Among them, the one in which the blind was restored to sight became well known to many citizens.⁷⁰

Another miracle which was performed through an oneiric message happened in Carthage. Innocentia, who was of the highest social standing and a deeply religious woman, had breast cancer, an incurable malady. Her life was already doomed. She betook herself to God alone by prayer. "As Easter drew nigh, she was instructed in a dream to watch for the first woman who came out from the baptistery

⁷⁰ *De Civitate Dei* 22.8.2 (BA 37.560); *Confessiones* 9.7.16 (BA 14.98-100). Cf. *Retractationes* 1.13.7 (CCL 57.39; FC 60 column 1.12.7); *Sermones* 286.5.4; 318.1-3 (PL 38.1299; 38.1437-40). Ambrose, *Epistula* 22.2 (CSEL 82/3.127-8); Paulinus, *Vita Ambrosii* 14 (PL 14.34; FC 15 column 5.14). For Ambrose's other dream in which he received a divine message about the Emperor Theodosius, see his *Epistula* 51.14 (CSEL 82/3.217). Socrates Scholasticus in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.17 (PG 67.117-21) reported that Helena, the emperor's mother, was directed by a dream to Jerusalem to find the sepulchre of Christ. Cf. Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicorum*. 2.33-4 (SC 441.300-4). Sozomen related a dream by which God directed the dreamer towards finding the relics of martyrs. Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.9 (GCS 50.20-1). For bishop's dream, see Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.11 (SC 41.100-2).

after being baptised and to ask her to make the sign of Christ upon her affected breast. She did so and was straightway healed.” Later, her physician examined her and found her outright cured.⁷¹ For Augustine, these two dreams represented not merely divine messages, but divine prescription and miracles. They aimed not to eulogise the relics or the foremost woman, but to exalt the divine power and love.

The most renowned dream reported by Augustine was the dream of his mother, a devout Christian. According to his *Confessiones*, when the nineteen-year-old Augustine remained as a Manichee, his mother Monica, in spite of detesting his blasphemies and refusing to allow him to live in her house,⁷² prayed for him with tears which wet the ground in every place of her prayer. Hence, she was granted a dream by which God consoled her. In this dream she saw herself standing on “a wooden rule (*regula lignea*)” (which was later interpreted by Augustine as “the rule of faith [*regula fidei*]”).⁷³ While she was grieving, a resplendent and joyful young man approached her, asking the reason for her anguish and daily tears. She answered that she mourned for her son’s perdition. He then told her to have no anxiety and advised her to see that where she was, there also was her son, standing beside her on the same rule.⁷⁴

Monica recounted her dream to Augustine. However, his interpretation was

⁷¹ *De Civitate Dei* 22.8.4 (BA 37.568; trans. R.W. Dyson, 1124). Tertullian stated that “Good Friday offers the more regular occasion for Baptism.” *De Baptismo* 19.1 (CCL 1.293; trans. A. Souter, 70). Augustine mentioned twice Hippocrates’ idea of no treatment for breast cancer. See Hippocrates, *Aphorisms* 6.38 (LCL 150.188). G. Bardy, *La Cité de Dieu* (BA 37), 568, note 2.

⁷² During that time (including the moment when Monica’s dream occurred) Augustine lived with her neighbor Romanianus, who was very rich and financially supported him and his Manichaean sect. *Confessiones* 6.14.24 (BA 13.566-8); *Contra Academicos* 2.2.3-4 (BA 4.64-68). H. Chadwick, *Saint Augustine: Confessions* (Oxford University Press, 1991), 49, note 41. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967, revised edition, 2000), 9; 43.

⁷³ *Confessiones* 3.11.19; 8.12.30 (BA 13.398-400; 14.68).

⁷⁴ *Confessiones* 3.11.19 (BA 13.398-400). Cf. 6.1.1 (BA 13.514-8): Augustine talked about Monica’s vision, by which she received a divine promise, without giving its content. Monica seemed to quite often request God to give her answer by means of dreams or visions, see 5.9.17; 6.13.23 (BA 13.494; 13.566). For discussion of Monica’s dream, see L.C. Ferrari, “The Dream of Monica in Augustine’s Confession,” in *Augustinian Studies* 10 (1979): 3-17.

that she should not despair of becoming what he was (i.e. becoming a Manichee). She instantly replied without hesitation: “what was said to me was not ‘where he is, you are,’ but ‘where you are, he is.’”⁷⁵ After recalling this dream account and its interpretations by both the mother and son, Augustine confessed,

I was more moved by your answer through my vigilant mother than by the dream itself. My misinterpretation seemed very plausible. She was not disturbed and quickly saw what was there to be seen, and what I certainly had not seen before she said it. By the dream the joy of this devout woman, to be fulfilled much later, was predicted many years in advance to give consolation at this time in her anxiety (*somnio, quo feminae piae gaudium tanto post futurum ad consolationem tunc praesentis sollicitudinis tanto ante praedictum est*).⁷⁶

This dream episode displayed God’s favour with both the mother and the son. It was interpreted by Augustine, not merely as a source of divine comfort for his mother, but also as a foretelling about him. As this dream became a prophecy, the idea that the divine had orchestrated his conversion and shaped his faithful spirituality (in conformity with the rule of faith) was accentuated. Interestingly, according to this text, Monica herself did not say that this dream was a divinely-inspired one, or that the young man in the dream was the divine or an angel. Nor did she call it a mantic dream or a prophecy. Augustine did, however, although no word or sign in this dream can reasonably be associated with the prophecy of his conversion.

⁷⁵ *Confessiones* 3.11.20 (BA 13.400; trans. V.J. Bourke, FC 21.69). Cf. Plutarch, *Roman Questions* 30 (ed. and trans. F.C. Babbitt, LCL 305.52): “Where you are Gaius, there am I Gaia (ὅπου σὺ Γάιος, ἐγὼ Γαία/Ubi tu Gaius, ego Gaia).” The use and denotations of *Gaius* and *Gaia*, see Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 1.7.28 (ed. J. Cousin, Tome 1.122). Chadwick, *Saint Augustine*, 50, note 42.

⁷⁶ *Confessiones* 3.11.20 (BA 13.402; trans. H. Chadwick, 50); cf. 5.9.17 (BA 13.494).

Additionally, there is no record of Monica's own interpretation of her dream, except her one-sentence reply (i.e. "what was said to me was not 'where he is, you are,' but 'where you are, he is.'") to Augustine's misinterpretation. Even her one-sentence interpretation (if it can be considered as a dream interpretation) was re-interpreted by him. In fact, this dream account was written by Augustine at least twenty-four years after this dream had occurred,⁷⁷ at a time when its original content could barely and vaguely be recalled. It actually teems with his theological thoughts and interpretations, rather than authentic content or its dreamer's own interpretation.

For example, Augustine stated that after this dream Monica altered her attitude towards her son and allowed him to live with her. The dramatic change in her attitude towards her son was attributed by him to divine advice in this dream, and also to the fact that she had foreseen her son, like her, standing on the rule of Christian faith.⁷⁸ Yet an alternative explanation may be that Monica understood the young man's remark in this dream as a practical suggestion that she should live with her son, standing on the same (wooden) floor (i.e. where she was, there was her son also), and that they should comply with the same rule (such as the rule of household).

Furthermore, this dream, while it may inspire how the converted Augustine perceived his past, did not affect the religious disposition of the Manichaean Augustine at all, as his conversion to Christianity occurred about thirteen years later.⁷⁹ However, he still interpreted it as if it had providentially impacted on his

⁷⁷ This dream occurred (circa 373) when Augustine was about 19 years old (*Confessiones* 3.11.20; 4.1.1 [BA 13.400-2; 406-8]). Augustine started writing his *Confessiones* in 397, according to Peter Brown. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 178.

⁷⁸ *Confessiones* 3.11.19; 8.12.30 (BA 13.398-400; 14.68). Cf. Ambrose. *De Virginibus* 2.2.8 (SAEMO 14/1.170-2), describing that the Virgin Mary "foresaw what was to be carried out."

⁷⁹ Monica's dream probably took place in 373 (*Confessiones* 3.11.20; 4.1.1 [BA 13.400-2; 406-8]). Augustine was converted in 386 (Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 97). Le Goff wrongly assumed that he was converted nine years after this dream (probably misreading "*nouem ferme anni...*" in *Confessiones* 3.11.20 [BA 13.402]). Le Goff, *L'imaginaire Médiéval*, 197. Augustine had been a Manichee for nine years (c.a. from 373 to 382). After leaving the Manichean community, however, he

conversion and marked the birth of his spiritual life under the divine direction.⁸⁰

Evidently, it was Augustine's concern and interest that determined the nature of Monica's dream and its meanings. The dream was not only construed towards retrospective sentiment and remorse, but also his periphrastic expression of divine providence and guidance upon every part of his life.

The essence of this dream episode in Augustine's *Confessiones* is more theological and autobiographical but less historiographical.⁸¹ The entire episode, including the dream narrative, its interpretation, its prophetic meaning and his confession, can be admired as a masterpiece of oneirocriticism and his *Confessiones* as a class of ancient oneiric autobiography.⁸² Notworthily, Augustine's belief that the correct interpretation of dreams weighed more heavily than the dreams themselves was reflected in this dream episode. This idea was also articulated in his other dream texts, and will be discussed in detail below.

Another dream account which deserves to be discussed, and whose authenticity was verified by Augustine himself, was recorded in his letter to the aged Alypius (written about 428). The daughter of Dioscorus, the president of the medical faculty, was sick and dying. The old man, feeling himself constrained to implore the compassion of Christ, bound himself by a vow that he would become a Christian if

did not immediately embrace Christian faith.

⁸⁰ *Confessiones* 3.11.19-20; 5.9.17; 6.13.23 (BA 13.398-402; 13.494; 13.566).

⁸¹ Pierre Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de Saint Augustin* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1st edition, 1950), 13-48, 188-201.

⁸² Modern psychological or psychoanalytical oneirocritics may identify Augustine's interpretation as a patristic (and a classic) example of their oneirocriticism. Nevertheless, its nature is still theological, and more precisely doctrinal, because it mainly aimed to articulate and disseminate his doctrine of God. For discussion, see previous chapter. For Augustine's oneiric autobiography, see Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions* (2nd edition, 1968), 127-160. Le Goff, *L'imaginaire Médiéval*, 295-7. Cf. Georg Misch, *Geschichte der Autobiographie* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1907), part 3, chapter 3; trans. by E.W. Dicks, *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1950, reprint, 1998), 625-67. It should be noted that although some scholars (e.g. Le Goff) label Augustine's *Confessions* as an oneiric autobiography, it actually contains no records of his own dreams (although in *Confessiones* 10.30.41-2 [BA 14.212-6] he mentioned his dreams, he did not describe their content at all).

she recovered. She did, but he perfidiously drew back from fulfilling his vow. Suddenly he was smitten with blindness and immediately conscious of the cause of this calamity. He admitted his fault aloud, and pledged again that if his sight recovered he would perform what he had vowed. It did, and he redeemed the pledge. However, after all the ceremonies of his reception Dioscorus was seized with paralysis, affecting almost all parts of his body. Through a dream he was warned by God that this had happened because he had not committed the Creed to memory. Afterward he confessed, and his body was restored.⁸³

Augustine comments that the divine intervened in the manner of Dioscorus' conversion because "his stubborn neck and his bold tongue could not be subdued without some miracle."⁸⁴ Augustine considered the monitory dream as equivalent to a miracle, like the divine healing upon the daughter, both of which called for people's conversion and submission to God. The oneiric warning might even prove more efficacious than the divine infliction by means of blindness or paralysis, as after this oneiric warning Dioscorus gave his full allegiance to the Christian faith without reservation, terminating Augustine's narrative of his conversion story.

Apparently, Augustine recognised dreams as a passage through which the divine conveyed messages to human beings. Yet, they and their content could not be beneficial until they illuminated the biblical truth and drew their dreamers, or the people related to them, closer to God and His salvation. In *On the Catechising of the*

⁸³ *Epistula* 227 (CSEL 57.481-3). For the conversion of pagans to Christianity because of dreams, see Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.46 (SC 132.194-8), in which he testified that many were converted to Christianity because some spirit had turned their mind by means of dreams. Also Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes* 18.12 (PG 35.1000); Jerome wrote that Arnobius embraced Christianity due to a dream. *Chronicon* s.a. 327 (GCS 47.231); Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.5 (GCS 50.57-8), reporting that by means of dreams many were convinced that it was better to become Christians. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* 2.12 (ed. B. Colgrave, 174-6), for example. For discussion of dreams in Bede's conversion narratives, see Patricia M. Davis, "Dreams and Visions in the Anglo-Saxon Conversion to Christianity," in *Dreaming*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2005): 75-88.

⁸⁴ *Epistula* 227 (CSEL 57.482; trans. J.G. Cunningham, *NPNF* 1.576).

Uninstructed, he repeated his conviction that dreams, like miracles, were used by God purely to direct people “to the more solid path and the surer oracles of the Scriptures” and to the understanding of God’s love and grace.⁸⁵ Dreams were a tool for evangelising or biblically edifying, and not merely an end in themselves. They had less merit in their own right than in theology or Christian faith.

Moreover, in his oneirology, Augustine seemed to greatly appreciate the importance of dreams, especially his mother’s dreams which concerned him. Nonetheless, in his dogmatics we can hardly find a compatible appreciation. Like Tertullian, Augustine utilised dreams to elucidate the doctrine of revelation, yet unlike Tertullian, he assigned dreams only a peripheral role in this doctrine. His protection and promotion of both church authority and leadership lead to the shift of his attitude towards dreams and oneiric revelation.

In *De Genesi ad Litteram*, by annotating Adam’s story in the Garden of Eden, Augustine illustrated the ways by which God communicates with humanity. He wrote that God speaks either through His own substance or through a creature. God does not speak through the former except in two cases: in creating the whole universe or in illuminating spiritual and intellectual creatures who are able to grasp God’s utterance. The latter way is designed for those who are unable. In this case, God “may employ a spiritual creature exclusively, in a dream or ecstasy, using the likeness of material things; or He may speak through a corporeal creature, as the

⁸⁵ *De Catechizandis Rudibus* 6.10 (BA 11/1.76; trans. S.D.F. Salmond, *NPNF* 3.289). Gregory of Nazianzus considered the vision of dreams as that which “God often bestows upon a soul worthy of salvation.” *Orationes* 18.12 (PG 35.1000; trans. *NPNF* 7.258). John Cassian told that some hidden meanings of the Bible could be revealed to monks in their sleep. *Collationes* 14.10.4 (SC 54.197). Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.9.80, 82 (SC 103.158-60, 162); Origen, *Homiliae in Genesim* 11.3 (SC 7.286-90). Miller observes that “dream becomes for Origen a figure for scriptural interpretation.” Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 93. However, Basil strongly disapproved of this kind of (dream) interpretation. *Homiliae in Hexaemeron* 9.1 (SC 26.478-80) in which the approach of literal interpretation was exalted.

bodily senses are affected by a form that appears or the sound a voice that is heard.” Here, the corporeal creature indicates God’s messenger, and the intellectual creature (who can comprehend God’s utterance) God’s prophet.⁸⁶ Divine communication with humans could be done through dreams, just as it could through His prophet or messenger. As prophets could deliver God’s message to people through a language which they can understand, dreams could achieve the same goal without any agent in between.

His readers might assume that in Augustine’s opinion, the one who receives a message dream from God is coordinate with His prophet, at least in terms of divinely revelatory transmission. However, Augustine attached much greater importance to prophets than to dreamers. In another chapter of the same work, by commenting on the biblical dream narrative of Joseph and the Pharaoh,⁸⁷ he explicated this idea more deeply, and thus further articulated his doctrine of revelation. He distinguished between a dreamer of revelatory dreams and a prophet in this narrative in order to clarify the differentiation between spiritual and intellectual visions by means of analogy.

In Augustine’s theory, there were three kinds of visions, the first being corporeal visions (*corporalem uisionem*), which could be seen by one’s eyes. The second kind were spiritual visions (*spiritalem uisionem*), which could be perceived only by one’s spirit [*spiritum hominis*] rather than by one’s bodily senses. For example, a man thinks of his wife when she is absent and perceives an image of her body. While his eyes see nothing, his soul beholds a certain image, which can be called a spiritual vision. This kind of image emerged either from his memory or was

⁸⁶ *De Genesi ad Litteram* 8.27.49-50 (BA 49.84; trans. J.H. Taylor, ACW 42.68). Gen 2.16-7.

⁸⁷ *Genesi* 12.9.20 (BA 49.356-8). Gen 41:1-57.

fashioned by the power of his thought. Finally, there were intellectual visions (*intellectualem uisionem*), which embraced those objects which had no visible or perceivable image resembling them, and which contained simply abstract concepts and could be experienced only by the intuition of one's mind. For example, when one pondered love, a certain intellectual vision might appear in one's mind.⁸⁸

Intellectual visions were (theologically-) qualitatively more excellent than spiritual ones, and spiritual ones more so than corporeal.⁸⁹ Likewise, the one whose mind grasped the meaning of a spiritual vision seen by another was greater than the seer because he beheld an intellectual vision which unraveled the seer's vision.

Augustine then glossed the dream narrative of Joseph and the Pharaoh to buttress his argument:

Thus it is obvious that prophecy belongs more to the mind than to the spirit,..., in the sense of a power of the soul inferior to the mind,... And so Joseph, who understood the meaning of the seven ears of corn and the seven kine, was more a prophet than Pharaoh, who saw them in a dream (*Itaque magis Ioseph propheta, qui intellexit, quid significarent septem spicae et septem boues, quam Pharaon, qui eas uidit in somnis*);⁹⁰ for Pharaoh saw only a form impressed upon his spirit, whereas Joseph understood through a light given to his mind. And for this reason the former had the gift of tongues, the latter, the gift of prophecy. In the one there was production of the images of things; in the other, the

⁸⁸ *Genesi* 12.6.15-12.8.19 (BA 49.346-56). Cf. *Confessiones* 10.11.18 (BA 14.172-4); *Contra Adimantum Manichaei Discipulum* 28.2 (BA 17.368-74); *De Trinitate* 11.3.6 (BA 16.174-8). Isidore repeated this threefold typology of visions in his *Etymologiarum* 7.8.37-41 (PL 82.286-7). For discussion of Augustine's theory of visions, see Michael Schmaus, *Die Psychologische Trinitätslehre des hl. Augustinus* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1927), 365-9; M. E. Karger and Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Aurelius Augustinus, Psychologie und Mystik. De Genesi ad Litteram 12* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1960), 6-23; J. H. Taylor, *St. Augustine: The Literal Meaning of Genesis* (ACW 42), 301, note 13 and 303, note 20.

⁸⁹ *Genesi* 12.24.51; 12.11.22-4; 12.16.33 (BA 49.414-8; 49.360-6; 49.382-4).

⁹⁰ In *Genesi* 12.11.23 (BA 49.362-4), Augustine reiterated this same idea by analysing the story of King Belshazzar (Dan 5:1-31).

interpretation of the images produced.⁹¹

In other words, a dreamer of revelatory dreams was never of equal significance to a prophet, the interpreter of revelatory dreams. The former did not necessarily denote the latter, while the latter could accomplish his mission without the acquisition of dreams, but only with a divinely-inspired interpretation of them. Less a prophet was he who, “by means of the images of corporeal objects, sees in spirit only the signs of the things signified” and a prophet was he who “is granted an understanding of the images.”⁹² Hence, the Pharaoh, who received two divinely prophetic dreams, could never be called a prophet and Joseph, who saw no dream (in this narrative), could be. Analogously, as the mind (which grasps the meaning of things) maintains superiority to the soul (which perceives things), so does a prophet to a dreamer.

An un-interpreted (or incorrectly interpreted) prophetic dream resembled an incomprehensible sign which neither profits nor edifies, just like a man speaking in tongues or uttering mysteries with his spirit which no one understands. People could not grasp the meanings of this dream unless it was explained by intelligible words. Augustine thus quoted from Paul, “If you give praise with the spirit, how shall he who fills the place of the uninstructed say ‘Amen’ to your thanksgiving? For he does not know what you are saying.” A revelatory dream demanded an intuition of a

⁹¹ *Genesi* 12.9.20 (BA 49.358; trans. Taylor, 189). See Gen 41:1-57. In Augustine’s opinion, since the power of the mind is greater than that of the soul, it is impossible that the soul has the power of divination. Predictive signs are given solely by God and can be deciphered only by the intuition of the mind (of God’s prophet), rather than by the soul. See *Genesi* 12.13.27-28 (BA 49.370-4). For the soul has the power of divination, see Plato, *Timaeus* 71D-E (LCL 234.186); Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 1.2 (ed. R.A. Pack, 4-11); Hippocrates, *Regimen* 4.87 (LCL 150.422); Galen, *De Dignotione ex Insomniis* (ed. K.G. Kühn, *Opera Omnia Claudii Galeni*, 833-4; trans. S.M. Oberhelman, in the appendix of “Galen, On Diagnosis from Dreams,” 44). Cf. John of Damascus, *De Fidei Orthodoxa* 2.19 (PTS 12.86).

⁹² *Genesi* 12.9.20 (BA 49.358; trans. Taylor, 189-90). The same idea can apply to the case of the Pharaoh’s cupbearer and baker, each of whom also received a prophetic dream. Gen 40:1-23.

prophet's mind to be understood. Once his intellectual understanding had grasped its meanings, then "there is revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching (*fit reuelatio uel agnitio uel prophetia uel doctrina*)."⁹³

To Augustine, a person who received a divine revelation by dreams, visions or other means was far subordinate to the one who could correctly interpret that revelation through divine inspiration. The recipient could be any one, even a pagan, but the interpreter must be a prophet who is chosen, divinely ordained and bestowed by God with the gift of prophecy. Without God, no revelation could be given; without His prophet, a given revelation remained esoteric, ineffective and un-functional. Besides Joseph and Daniel, Peter and Paul (the first generation of church leaders) were also esteemed by Augustine as the exemplars of divinely elected prophets who could grasp divine utterance in revelations.⁹⁴

More crucially, since outside the Church there was no salvation (*salus extra ecclesiam non est*), as the Holy Spirit was only bestowed in the Church,⁹⁵ and since a prophet was divinely assigned for the equipping of the saints for the work of the

⁹³ *Genesi* 12.8.19 (*BA* 49.354-6; trans. Taylor, 188-9). See 1 Cor 14:1-19 (quoting from 14:16). Taylor argues that Augustine's exegesis of this biblical passage is questionable. J.H. Taylor, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 305, note 38.

⁹⁴ For Peter, see *Genesi* 12.11.22-4 (*BA* 49.360-6) and for Paul, *Genesi* 12.1.1-3.8; 12.28.56-29.57 (*BA* 49.328-38; 49.428-32). Cf. Acts 10:1-33 and 2 Cor 12.2-4. For discussion of prophets who are chosen and endowed with spiritual gifts by the divine and through whom revelations can be grasped and beneficial, see *Genesi* 12.9.20; 12.11.23-4; 12.13.28 (*BA* 49.358; 49.362-6; 49.374); 12.14.30 (*BA* 49.378; trans. Taylor, 198: "God instructs those who are obedient to Him."); 12.19.41 (*BA* 49.398; trans. Taylor, 206: the Holy Spirit "makes them true prophets or for the moment aids them in seeing and narrating the vision that must be revealed through them."); 12.21.44; 12.28.56 (*BA* 49.404; 49.428-30).

⁹⁵ Augustine, *De Baptismo* 7.44.87 (*BA* 29.552); *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 146.19 (*CCL* 40.2136-7 [*NPNF* 8, column 147.15]); *Epistula* 141 (*CSEL* 44.235-46); *Sermo ad Caesareensis Ecclesiae Plebem* 6 (*PL* 43.694-5); *Sermones* 267.4; 268.2 (*PL* 38.1231; 38.1232); Cyprian, *Epistula* 73.21 (the Latin quotation from *CCL* 3C.555); 73.24 ("no remission of sins can be given outside the Church." *CCL* 3C.559; trans. E. Willis, *ANF* 5.385); *De Unitate Ecclesiae* 6 (ed. by E.H. Blakeney, 18). Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Explanatio in Psalmos* 30.22 (*PG* 69.865); Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.7.4-5 (*SC* 41.34); Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job* 16.4.5-16.5.6 (*CCL* 143A.800-1). Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 203-7; 412-7.

ministry and for the building up of the Church, the body of Christ,⁹⁶ it must be the case that either true revelations (including not merely revelatory dreams but their hidden meanings) or spiritual gifts could be acquired only by God's loyal servants in the Church (especially her bishops, the successors of Peter)⁹⁷ and only for the benefit of her people and ministry. No one outside the Church could be divinely endowed with spiritual gifts, such as the gift of prophecy or the gift of interpreting dreams. Those who were excommunicated from the Church could neither be a prophet (due to being destitute of spiritual gifts) nor obtain a revelation. Nor could they (like the pagan dreamers, the Pharaoh, King Nebuchadnezzar and King Belshazzar)⁹⁸ decode it even if this occurred.

In Augustine's discourses on the issue of revelatory dreams and prophets, we can sense his predisposition towards the centralisation of ecclesiastical power or the power of church leaders. The authority over the matters of revelation belonged not to the one who could receive a revelatory dream from God, but the one who could be chosen by God and given the spiritual gift of correctly interpreting it. While Tertullian linked the doctrine of revelation to soteriology, Augustine related it wholly to ecclesiology. His oneirology, his doctrine of revelation and his ecclesiology were mutually supportive of one another.

Augustine's doctrinal system, on the one hand, rendered church leaders legitimate and dominant in controlling the events of revelation, in restraining its

⁹⁶ Eph 4:11-2. The Church as the body of Christ, see Augustine, *Sermones* 22.9 (CCL 41.299).

⁹⁷ Cf. Hippolytus of Rome, *Commentarius in Daniele* 2.3 (a heavenly dream "was kept secret from men who think of earthly things" and "to those who seek after heavenly things heavenly mysteries might be revealed" SC 14.131; trans. S.D.F. Salmond, *ANF* 5.186); Origen, *Epistula ad Africanum* 10 (the saints "have been favoured with divine dreams." SC 302.550 [column 16]; trans. *ANF* 4.389); Gregory the Great, *Dialogorum* 4.50 (asserting that only the saint "can distinguish true revelations from the voices and images of illusion...." [SC 265.174-6; trans. O.J. Zimmerman, *FC* 39.262]);

⁹⁸ *Genesi* 12.11.23 (BA 49.362-4). Dan 2:1-49; 4:1-37.

course, and even in determining who was able to decipher it. It implied that only the saintly and church leaders (such as his godly mother or Bishop Ambrose) who safeguarded the interests of the Church, but never heretics or pagans, had the special privilege of obtaining true revelation directly from God. It also suggested that a church leader's interpretation of dreams (such as Augustine's interpretation of Monica's dream) should be divinely inspired. On the other hand, it totally oppressed those who attempted to subvert church authority in the name of receiving an oneiric revelation or a (new) prophecy from God. It condemned their interpretations of dreams as heretical, if not demon-inspired.⁹⁹ It alluded to the idea that dreams could not be a prevalent means by which ordinary people learn divine revelation.

Here, Basil's teaching about prophetic dreams finds an echo in Augustine's doctrine. Basil remarked:

Where then is the need of having recourse to dreams and of hiring their interpreters,... Every dream is not a prophecy,... Those who, as Isaiah says, dream and love to sleep in their bed forget that an operation of error is sent to "the children of disobedience." And there is a lying spirit, which arose in false prophecies, and deceived Ahab. Knowing this they ought not to have been so lifted up as to ascribe the gift of prophecy to themselves.... The Gospels need no dreams to add to their credit. The Lord has sent His peace to us, and left us a new commandment, to love one another, but dreams bring strife and division and destruction of love. Let them therefore not give occasion to the devil to attack their souls in sleep; nor make their imaginations of more authority than the instruction of salvation.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ For demon-inspired dreams, see Chapter 4 of this thesis.

¹⁰⁰ Basil, *Epistula* 210.2 and 6 (ed. Y. Courtonne, [Tome II] 190 and 197; trans. *NPNF* 8.249 and 251), the letter which was written about 375 when he was a bishop of Caesarea). Cf. Isa 56:10; Eph 2.2; 1 King 22:22.

Basil may have gone even further than Augustine on this issue. In his theology, there was no place for prophetic dreams or their oneirocritics at all. The Bible had provided everything people needed to know; its teachings and guidance had never been ambiguous. Therefore, neither dreams nor their interpretations could possibly make a contribution to Christian faith. Christians should not wrongly assume having the gift of prophecy, because this was a trick of evil spirits attempting to deceive people. The dreamers of prophetic dreams arose out of the impious, the defiant or the like. They endeavoured to gain their power by oneiric proclamation. They introduced nothing but dissention and schism into the Church. Predictably, prophetic dreams and their dreamers wielded no influence in Basil's community. Even a true prophet who received a dream message from God might not dare to mention it.

Like Basil, Augustine, a bishop (at the time he wrote *De Genesi ad Litteram*) in the Church, established a doctrine of revelation which completely reversed the tenet proposed by Tertullian (who was condemned as an outsider by the Church) or by the author of *The Shepherd* or *Passio* (who was outside the church leadership). This tenet contended the universality of divine revelation and the possibility of every believer (and even non-believer) being God's prophet or messenger. Yet Augustine's doctrine neutralised this tenet by shifting firstly from the recipient of oneiric revelation as its protagonist to its interpreter, secondly from individual autonomy as its essential preference to ecclesiastical heteronomy, and finally from universalism as its characteristic to particularism.¹⁰¹ However, whereas it consolidated clerical

¹⁰¹ In fact, Tertullian ever insisted that "the Church is the unique home of the Holy Spirit, the sole repository of the apostolic revelation," as Kelly has observed. But these ideas underwent a radical transformation when he joined the Montanists. Eventually he substituted a charismatic society for the visible, hierarchically constituted Church. Tertullian, *De Exhortatione Castitatis* 7 (CCL 2.1024-6); *De Pudicitia* 21.17 ("The Church is the Spirit Himself. ... The Church will pardon sin, but this is the

authority over the affairs of divine revelation, it also constrained the Holy Spirit's action, regulated God's apocalypse and confined Christ's salvation within the Church. It might even suppress the supremacy and ministry of the Holy Trinity more than the influence and development of the heretics who claimed to possess new revelation, or new prophecy.

The older Augustine grew and the more ecclesiastical power he held, the more suspicious of prophetic dreams he became,¹⁰² although his conversion was closely associated with a (claimed-to-be) prophetic dream received by his mother. Evodius, the Bishop of Uzala and a friend of Augustine, wrote a letter to him, raising some questions about prophetic dreams.¹⁰³ In his reply (circa 415) to the bishop, Augustine did not answer the questions at all, and even reproached Evodius for inquiring about prophetic dreams, "which are of exceedingly rare occurrence." He said that "as I discover more plainly my inability to account for the ordinary facts of our experience, when awake or asleep, throughout the whole course of our lives, the more do I shrink from venturing to explain what is extraordinary."¹⁰⁴

Usually, Augustine would more or less provide answers to whatever questions he was asked, particularly if they were asked by a bishop. His taciturnity on Evodius' question was a genuine anomaly. He judged prophetic dreams to be unworthy of further discussion, for they were extremely exceptional. Being consistent with his thought in this letter, Augustine provided no other discussion of this subject in his

Church of the Spirit, through a man who has the Spirit; it is not the Church who consists of a number of bishops." *CCL* 2.1328; trans. W. P. Le Saint, *ACW* 28.122). Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 200.

¹⁰² For a succinct discussion of the shift of Augustine's attitude towards dreams and oneiric revelation, see Le Goff, *L'imaginaire Médiéval*, 295-300; for a thorough study, see Dulaey, *Le Rêve dans la vie et la pensée de saint Augustin*, 71-200.

¹⁰³ *Epistula* 158.9-10 (*CSEL* 44.494-6). Evodius was Augustine's early and life-long friend (*Confessiones* 9.8.17 [*BA* 14.102-4]) and the one who participated in Augustine's dialogues in *De Quantitate Animae* (*BA* 5.226-368) and *De Libero Arbitrio* (*BA* 6.136-414). Vernon Bourke, *Saint Augustine: Confessions* (*FC* 21), 244, note 65.

¹⁰⁴ *Epistula* 159.2 (*CSEL* 44.499; trans. Cunningham, 513).

subsequent writings. He may have supposed that no explanation of prophetic dreams was offered by him, no attention of his friends and audience would be paid to them. Better to ignore or be ignorant of them than to understand or interpret them wrongly. His strong stance against them is discernible.¹⁰⁵ Considering his response and attitude to this question asked by a bishop (i.e. censure and disinclination), it might not be difficult to imagine how he would discuss or preach about the same issue to lay Christians and his congregations. Surely, as prophetic dreams became extremely exceptional and unfathomable, the domain of revelation would become more cramped and controllable by ecclesiastical leadership.

Dreams and Augustine's doctrine of revelation explicitly bear a reciprocal relationship in his dream texts. In terms of methodology, he associated dreams closely with his conversion for the indication of its divine endorsement. He interpreted biblical dream narratives (e.g. those of Joseph and the Pharaoh) so as to reinforce his doctrine. In terms of hermeneutics, his doctrine diverted his oneirological path. It defined the utility and function of prophetic dreams. It posited them in a peripheral place, diminishing their significance and dynamics as well as marginalising their dreamers. It served to promote the power of church leaders while lessening that of their foes in the realms of both oneirology and revelation. It is within this doctrine that we discern a turn of Augustine's attitude towards dreams and oneiric revelation.

Conclusion

¹⁰⁵ For the negative attitude of church fathers towards prophetic dreams, see Gregory of Nyssa, *De Hominis Opificio* 13.12-13 ("while all men are guided by their own minds, there are some few who are deemed worthy of evident Divine communication;..." [ed. G.H. Forbes, 184; trans. Moore, *NPNF* 5.402]); Basil, *Epistula* 210 (ed. Y. Courtonne, [Tome II] 189-97); Cassian, *Collationes* 13.14.5-8; 15.1.6-2.3 (*SC* 54.172; 54.211-2); Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium* 11.16; 18.24 (ed. Moxon, 41-4; 74-8 [*NPNF* 11 column 11.30; 18.46]).

The primary purpose of divinely-inspired dreams in patristic texts, like those in Greco-Roman, Hellenistic Jewish or biblical texts, was to dispatch divine messages to humans. Message dreams preponderate in any given oneiric literature of the world, since a healing dream, a symbolical dream, or a silent dream (with simply visual images) contains or indicates a certain message. A visibly soundless dream (such as the dream of the Pharaoh or that of King Nebuchadnezzar)¹⁰⁶ may carry even more messages than an auditory dream. It speaks for the divine without words and, under the divine providence, it can be perfectly “heard” or comprehended by its dreamer, sometimes with the aid of a dream interpreter. The intent of communication, instruction or admonition motivates the divine to intervene into human life by means of dreams. Accordingly, dreams serve as a divine language to that end.

But why does God have to communicate with people by dreams, instead of by biblical words or other sacred agents (e.g. the clergy) which they already have with them?¹⁰⁷ The four authors of the patristic dream texts examined in this chapter offered at least three reasons. Firstly, message dreams owned the property of individuality. The messages in the Scripture provided only general information, such as theological thoughts, moral teachings, ritual laws and the tenets of faith. Likewise, the finite ability of the clergy did not suffice for every individual demand. They could not know every single difficulty their congregants encountered. Their sermons might seek to eschew dealing with personal issues. As a result, one found it difficult to obtain a perfect solution from either the Scripture or the clergy to one’s personal problem.

¹⁰⁶ Gen 41:1-36; Dan 2:1-45.

¹⁰⁷ Take Perpetua as an example. *Passio* shows that Perpetua’s dream diary quotes several biblical pericopes. This may suggest that she had the Scripture (or, at least, some canonical texts) with her or was able to memorise a lot of biblical passages. Moreover, *Passio* 3.7 (SC 417.110) mentions that two deacons were able to minister Perpetua even though she was imprisoned. *Passio* 6.7 (SC 417.124) also tells us that one of them (Pomponius) frequently met Perpetua.

Nonetheless, through a dream message God could gratify what one desired to know or provide the guidance or answer which one needed in particular situations. For example, *Passio* mentioned the problem of Perpetua's brother, Dinocrates, who was suffering after death. The biblical teachings or Perpetua's deacon and bishop may not have been able to address this problem. Yet God gave her the answer through the messages in her second and third dreams.¹⁰⁸ According to Augustine, it was by a dream, instead of by biblical or clergy's words, that God consoled her with the divine promise. The physician Dioscorus realised the cause of his paralysis also through a dream message.

Secondly, message dreams owned the property of practicality. Christians and church authorities often disputed with one another on many issues, although they shared the same Scripture and were directed under the same leadership. A divinely dream message might effectively make a timely response to a currently controversial issue and grant an authoritative resolution. For example, early Christians accepted the Pauline teaching of "one" baptism (ἐν βάπτισμα)¹⁰⁹ through which all sins prior to baptism could be remitted. An influential current trend in the early Church also favoured the view that no remission was available for postbaptismal sin.¹¹⁰ But when postbaptismal sin had pervaded everywhere in the early Christian community, it became a practical and serious problem and urgently required an alternative resolution. Before long the Church read Hermas' revelatory dreams, whose divine message affirmed the possibility of the second forgiveness for sins committed after baptism. This dream message would have properly fixed the problem; otherwise *The Shepherd* would not have been widely appraised as a canonical book in the early

¹⁰⁸ Cf. John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Acta Apostolorum* 34.4 (PG 60.249-50).

¹⁰⁹ Eph 4:5.

¹¹⁰ See Heb 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 1 John 5:16. Also J.N.D Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 198-199.

Christian community.

Thirdly, message dreams owned the property of naturalness. As argued by Tertullian, if God wanted to warn a man, it was more natural that He did so by dreams than by other means, such as a bolt of lightening or a sudden stroke. Dreams could create a terrifying atmosphere in which the man was frightened, and at the same time could hear a clearly divine admonishment. They could effectively accomplish the divine mission in an acceptable way. It is likely these three reasons that rendered dreams a preferable way for God to convey messages to humans.

Moreover, these four authors represented several notions of dreams, which were probably held by the majority of early Christians, as these dream texts were highly celebrated in the early Church. They esteemed dreams as a means through which God transmitted messages to people. These dream messages emerged as God's words or revelations, bringing divine promise, prophecy, consolation, encouragement, command, warning or guidance into this world. They were always very crucial for the dreamers themselves or for those related to them, and in some cases for both. Some message dreams, though received by an individual dreamer in the first instance, benefited the whole Christian community, or even several cities.

Dreams could disclose a hidden criminal, indicate the location of concealed treasures, reveal the relics of the martyrs and prescribe for the ailing an efficacious treatment. They lauded the name of the divine alone, never that of the oneiric angel, their dreamer or interpreter. Message dreams also played a significant role in the repentance and conversion of many Christians in the early Church, including Augustine. Dreams acted as an agent for illuminating people's need for change and making them return to God. They were efficient in altering people's lives and

occurred “in order that the name of God might be glorified.”¹¹¹ This salvific function of dreams has been a unique characteristic of Christian oneirology.

From the perspective of these four authors, the nature of divinely-inspired dreams can be understood as divine messages, as a vehicle which carried divine words, or as a language by which God uttered to humanity. In their oneirology, dreams, virtually like the Holy Scripture, were inspired by God, capable of instructing people for salvation and profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God might be perfect and thoroughly furnished to all good works.¹¹² Thanks to the efforts of these authors and the influence of their dream texts, message dreams still retained, especially in Africa, “their authority in the Church as important means of solving perplexities,” as Adolf Harnack has noted.¹¹³

Furthermore, these four authors’ writings on this subject attempted not merely to validate message dreams, but also to promulgate their doctrine of revelation. Almost every patristic text which narrates or discusses message dreams holds certain beliefs about the doctrine of revelation. Each of them can make a contribution to our understanding of this doctrine in its oneirological framework, as well as in its early Christian context. Nevertheless, on account of the coherence, clarity and profundity of these authors’ doctrinal articulations through dream narratives or discussions, the contribution made by their dream texts is probably greater than that made by all other patristic dream texts.

The issues that concerned these four authors the most were: who could

¹¹¹ *The Shepherd*, Vision 3.4.3 (ed. and trans. M.W. Holmes, 476).

¹¹² 2 Tim 3:15-7.

¹¹³ Adolf Harnack, *History of Dogma*, Vol. II. Trans. by Neil Buchanan (NY: Dover Publications, 1961), 108, footnote 4.

receive or interpret revelatory dreams (prophetic dreams, in most cases,) and to whom were the messages of revelatory dreams targeted. Their thoughts on these issues reached two extremes. On the one hand, three of these authors, following the prophet Joel and the writer of the Book of Acts, believed that God would pour out His Spirit upon all people, and all believers were able to have dreams or visions from the divine.¹¹⁴ In *The Shepherd*, a slave could be the candidate for the dreamer of God, and in *Passio*, a new female adherent. A revelatory dream occurred by reason of the imperative need of an individual or the Christian community. It was revealed to a certain person because of the will of God, the dream Inspirer (*inspirator*), not because of the dreamer's virtue, knowledge, fame, or position. Concordantly, in both texts, the leaders of the Church were those to whom the revelatory messages were addressed, while the persons with lower ecclesiastical status within the community were chosen as divine messengers.

Tertullian even presupposed that God had no partiality for Christians in the realm of revelation. All people, including pagans, could receive revelatory dreams from God. A dreamer of divinely mantic dreams must be a prophet, and everyone could be that dreamer and the intended audience of their messages. The acquisition of divine revelation was tantamount to that of divine vindication or endorsement, through which the grassroots members of the early Church could have a possible influence over doctrinal or ecclesiastical issues. In this regard, revelatory dreams were particularly significant to the lay Christians who desired to voice their opinions concerning these issues.

On the other hand, Augustine believed that a man who received a revelation might simply be a dreamer who oneirically saw revelatory signs or prophetic visions,

¹¹⁴ Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17-8.

yet never knew their true meaning. A true prophet was confirmed not by his or her ability to dream prophetically, but by their ability to grasp the hidden meaning of revelatory dreams through the spiritual gift of prophecy, which was granted solely to God's chosen servants in the Church for the good of them and their people alone. Outside the Church there was neither salvation nor revelation. Augustine also implied that the right of gaining true revelation and understanding revelatory messages was vested only in the saintly and church leaders. He eventually registered the conception that prophetic dreams occurred very scarcely, and thus deserved no attention or credibility. In comparison, the theology of Tertullian the Montanist and that of Augustine the ecclesiastical-authoritarian lay at the opposite pole of the doctrinal horizon of revelation.

The view which Augustine supported can definitely be said to have won favour with the majority of church authorities in Christian history, notwithstanding it may conflict with the view presented in Joel's, Matthean's or Lukan's oneirological tradition¹¹⁵, as well as several earlier patristic dream texts. The incapability of people outside the Church or the church leadership to acquire revelation directly from God denotes the fact that they could only access it through learning from the clergy. This view facilitated church leaders to maintain both their absolute authority and the established order or clerical dogmatism, while de-authorising and invalidating the challenge or opposition from others (particularly those subordinate to them) against their dominion over doctrinal or ecclesiastical affairs. It would unsurprisingly be enthusiastically supported and identified as "orthodox" by the ecclesiastical leading class.

¹¹⁵ Matthean's dream tradition also supports the idea that pagans (like the Magi) could receive and understand revelatory messages through dreams directly from God without an agent in between. Matt 2:12.

This view, however, undermined not only biblical teachings concerning the subject, but also the possibility and necessity of divine revelation being given to someone other than those designated by church authorities. Consequently, the Church might no longer receive any revelatory messages from God, particularly in the situation whereby its leaders were corrupt or misguided, a situation all too common throughout ecclesiastical history. The unavailability of ordinary people and pagans to have revelatory dreams might also precipitate the deconstruction of one of the commonest communicative channels between divinity and humanity.

Indeed, this view was dubious and un-biblical. But why did several church fathers, such as Basil and Augustine, whose mother was a dreamer and whose conversion was associated with a revelatory dream, still support it? A critical problem inherent in revelatory dreams may have goaded them into doing so. This problem arose from the fact that these dreams were always claimed to be authentic by their dreamers, whereas their authenticity could never be proved either by dreamers themselves or by others. Actually, it was hopeless to verify them since no eyes could see them, and no ears could hear their messages (for even their dreamers received them by “the-other” senses of sight and sound, rather than by their physical eyes and ears). In terms of their ontological status, they were nothing but the description of their content given by their dreamers.

This problem inevitably placed church leaders in a real dilemma: if they accepted a certain man’s dream as a revelation (whether it was derived from God or not), then both he and his dream message might strongly challenge or even subvert their authority (e.g. in the cases of *the Shepherd* and *Passio*). Also their acknowledgment of this dreamer would actively encourage another dreamer to emerge. On the other hand, if they denounced his revelatory dream, which was really

generated by God, as false, or if they simply ignored it, then they might profane divine revelation and disdain God's words. Expectedly, revelatory dreams have been a thorny problem, rather than a divine boon, for the clergy. Some church fathers determined to embrace them whereas others considered it necessary to distrust or suppress them. The latter's view will prevail in the Church if her leaders are more concerned with authority or power than divine revelation.

All in all, these four authors can be categorised into two types according to their doctrinal inclination regarding oneiric revelation: one represents the preference for the universalism of revelation (the availability of obtaining revelation by dreams for all) and the centrality of its individual recipients; the other the preference for its particularism (the spiritual gift of grasping the meanings of revelatory dreams only bestowed on a few in the Church, particularly her leaders) and the power of ecclesiastical manipulation of revelatory events.

Despite profound discord between these two groups, they all shared a similar propagational methodology and hermeneutical approach for their doctrinal articulation through means of oneirology. Methodologically, since dreams in the Scripture function as a common passage by which God communicates with humanity, they were recognised by these four authors as a conceptual arena in which they could fittingly demonstrate their doctrine of revelation with the confirmation of biblical oneirological tradition. They doctrinalised message dreams so as to disseminate their doctrine. Their dream narratives or discourses therefore overflow with doctrinal indications or allusions. In their texts, dreams were appropriated by both dreamers (such as Hermas and Perpetua) and dream interpreters (such as Augustine) as a proclamation of being divinely chosen people and having being given a special authority in revealing God's words, as well as in constructing the teachings about

revelation. The doctrine of revelation was therefore further clarified and illuminated by their writings on message dreams.

Hermeneutically, their doctrine of revelation defined the focal points of their dream reports or remarks. It integrated soteriology or ecclesiology into a larger theological scheme by expounding revelatory dreams. It then shifted the boundary and landscape of oneiric activity. For example, in Tertullian's doctrine, the Christian God is interpreted as the one and only producer of all prophetic dreams known in human history. It thus extended the power and impact of dreams and their messages from an individual dreamer to all humanity. However, in Augustine's doctrine, prophetic dreams enjoyed no freedom, and their dynamic was circumscribed. It considerably contracted the quantity of their occurrence (i.e. they could occur only rarely) and assigned the privilege of receiving or interpreting them only to a limited number of people. In Basil's view, prophetic dreams were even explicated as a threat, rather than a blessing.

Message dreams in patristic literature, unlike those in Greco-Roman literature, were endowed by the divine chiefly for the salvific purpose of individuals, for the need of the community of faith, or for the glorification of God. They enlightened people as to biblical truth and the knowledge of God. They urged people to repent and convert to Christianity. More peculiarly, they were recounted or discussed by Christian writers neither for a literary nor for an oneirological intention, but for a doctrinal one. They were indivisibly entwined with the doctrine of revelation. Accordingly, it is impossible to penetrate correctly patristic views of divinely-inspired message dreams without reading these dreams in their context of the early Christian doctrine of revelation. On the other hand, without the aid of that correct penetration, our understanding of early Christian doctrine of revelation can

never be complete.

Chapter 7

Dreams as the Dynamic of Faith Reinforcement and Their Relation to Eschatology

Beware, therefore, you who exult in your wealth, lest those in need groan, and their groaning rise up to the Lord, and you together with your goods be shut outside the door of the tower. — *The Shepherd of Hermas. Vision* 3.9.6.

Then I awoke and realised that it was not with wild beasts that I would fight but with the devil, but I knew that the victory was awaiting me. — *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* 10.14.

So soon as the body had been taken from the tomb and raised up to the heaven, branches of virgin roses (that is what unopened flowers are usually called) grew up from the same tomb. — Augustine, *Epistula* 158.

You have often heard me tell about a saintly man... after his death he appeared to his followers in a white robe and told them of the wonderful welcome he had received.
— Gregory the Great, *Dialogorum* 4.49.

According to patristic texts, many divinely-inspired dreams¹ were bestowed by the divine on those who encountered severe persecution and to the martyrs and the saints before they died. Through dreams they received promises and consolation directly

¹ “Divine-inspired dream(s)” hereafter in this chapter referred to as “dream(s),” unless specifically stated otherwise.

from the divine. Dreams also rendered them capable of not only foreseeing the divine reward for their fidelity and devotion to God, but also of learning the meaning of their present agony from the future, heavenly perspective. After awakening from these dreams, their faith was stronger. They could now undergo their current suffering without fear, but with great hope, and could ardently embrace martyrdom and peacefully depart from this world. Dreams in early Christian martyrography, as well as hagiography, played a dynamic role in reinforcing faith.

Moreover, the dreams of those under persecution, the martyrs or the saints, were exploited by several early Christian writers (including dreamers themselves) in order to articulate or propagate their eschatological teachings in the form of dream reports. Dreams enabled them to depict the catastrophic events in “the last (ἐσχάταις) days,” the approaching divine punishment, the coming Kingdom of God, the heavenly reward for the faithful and the state of their afterlife, just as the visions in *The Book of Revelation* enabled its author to do the same.

In terms of methodology, dreams offered these Christian writers an eschatological stage on which they could exhibit what would happen in the future (both on the earth and in heaven) and what people could not see in the present. In terms of hermeneutics, their eschatology doctrinally expanded the domain of dreams from a personal and mundane horizon to a collective and heavenly one. It designated dreams as a missionary opportunity to urge the wicked to repent and the righteous to persevere. Within it, Christian faith, hope and dreams were fittingly related to one another.

In this chapter, I argue that from the standpoint of these Christian writers the nature of divinely-inspired dreams can be thought of as the dynamic of faith reinforcement. I also demonstrate the methodological and hermeneutical

relationships between dreams and eschatology in their dream texts. The four dream texts, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, bishop Evodius' letter to Augustine and Gregory the Great's *Dialogorum*, were chosen to be examined in this chapter because their dream narratives or discussions not only pertained to an eschatological context, but gave more details about dreamers and more phenomenal descriptions of their dreams than other similar patristic texts.

1. *The Shepherd of Hermas*

The Shepherd testifies that the divine strengthened Hermas' faith by dreams. The first portion of this text contains the narratives of Hermas' oneiric visions (*Vision* 1 to 5). According to *Vision* 4, the divine revealed to Hermas the impending persecution which he would encounter. In this oneiric vision, Hermas saw a monstrous beast, who could readily destroy a city and out of whose mouth flaming locusts emerged. As it was approaching Hermas, he began to cry and beg the Lord to rescue him. He then heard, "Do not be double-minded." Having put his faith in the Lord, he boldly faced the beast. Amazingly, the beast merely thrust out its tongue and did not even twitch until Hermas had passed it by.² After a while, he met the divine messenger, who disclosed the reason why he could remain unharmed. The divine said to him:

You deserved to escape from it because you cast your cares on God and opened your heart to the Lord,... Therefore, the Lord sent His angel who has authority over the beasts, and whose name is Thegri, and he shut its mouth so that it could not hurt you. You have escaped from great

² *Vision* 4.1.5-9 (ed. M.W. Holmes, 496). For the beast, cf. Dan 7:3-14; Rev 11:7; 12:3-4, 7-17; 13:1-6; 16:13-16; 17:7-18; 20:1-10. A similar scene appears in *The Acts of Philip* 102-5. *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* 4.7 (SC 417.116) also describes that the dragon, as if in fear of Perpetua, slowly lifted up its head.

tribulation because of your faith, and because you were not double-minded in the presence of such a huge beast.³

The whole dream text of *The Shepherd* mentions neither the calamity which was really confronting Hermas, nor how he responded to it.⁴ Yet, regardless of what that matter may have been, his oneiric experience with the divine encouragement in this vision would certainly have had a great effect on his determination to stand firm faithfully in the face of severe persecution. On account of its capacity, this oneiric vision can be regarded as a force for the fortification of Christian faith.

Moreover, the very essence of this dream text was eschatological. Its oneirology primarily worked for its eschatology. Dreams or dream narratives facilitated its dramatic portrayal of apocalyptic events and its relay of divine commands. Pelikan notices that eschatological language was vivid in *The Shepherd*, supplying early Christians with faith and hope.⁵ The divine messages, warnings and parables in this dream text were all relevant materials through which its author constructed his eschatology for the early Christian community.

In *Vision 1*, a heavenly figure reproached Hermas in his dream for coveting his mistress when he, being her slave, saw her bathing. The heavenly figure said to him, “The desire for evil rose up in your heart.... It certainly is a sin.... But those who aim at evil things in their hearts bring death and captivity upon themselves, especially those who set their affections on this world and glory in their riches and

³ *Vision 4.2.4* (ed. and trans. Holmes, 498). See Ps 55:22; Dan 6:22 “My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not hurt me,....” Cf. *Passio* 4.4-7 (Perpetua, encountering the enormous dragon, was unharmed “in the name of Lord Jesus Christ,” rather than under the protection of the angel. [SC 417.114-6]). The angel Thegri in charge of beasts, cf. *1 Enoch* 20.7 (Gabriel). For discussion, see Eric Peterson, “Die Begegnung mit dem Ungeheuer,” in *Frühkirche, Judentum, und Gnosis* (Freiburg: Herder, 1959), 298. Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 94.

⁴ For discussion of the possible calamity which Hermas and his community may be encountering, see Angelo O’Hagan, “The Great Tribulation to Come in the Pastor of Hermas,” in *SP* 4 (1961), 305-11.

⁵ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 126.

look not forward to the blessings of the life to come.” She concluded, “Their souls will regret it, for they have no hope; instead they have abandoned themselves and their true life.”⁶

We may recognise that this divine reproach, seemingly thought of as a censure for a personal immorality, was essentially eschatological preaching. It consists of the core tenets of eschatology, including the condemnation of sinners, the hopelessness of the wicked, the threat of death, the disdain for this world and the emphasis on the afterlife. Its reprimand of the rich also provides evidence to buttress our recognition. This reprimand may baffle readers, since Hermas emerged not as a wealthy man, but a slave. Here, Hermas was not really the accused in court, the affluent were. The divine (or the author of the text) simply made an eschatological drama out of Hermas’ daydream and performed it in (and through) his dream.⁷ Consequently, several parts of the lines in this drama (i.e. divine exhortations) had nothing to do with Hermas or his daydream (i.e. his immorally sexual covetousness). This was a typical methodology (technique) of apocalyptic literature, in which the divine finger was pointed at someone, but only to condemn others.⁸

Similar divine warnings and promises were reiterated in *Vision 2*. By means of Hermas’ dream, the divine cautioned that those “who work righteousness must stand steadfast, and do not be double-minded, in order that your passage may be with the holy angels. Blessed are those of you who patiently endure the coming great tribulation and who will not deny their life.”⁹ At the end of this dream narrative, the

⁶ *Vision 1.1.8-9* (ed. and trans. Holmes, 456). see *Mandate 12.6.2* (ed. Holmes, 554). Cf. Ps 49: 6-20; Matt 5:28.

⁷ Miller observes the ethical critique of the wealthy as the main concern of this dream, but she overlooks its eschatological context. *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 137-8. On the contrary, Osiek notices the context, but omits the main concern. *Shepherd of Hermas*, 44-5.

⁸ See Ezek 24:15-24; 28:1-19; Rev 17:1-13; 18:1-24.

⁹ *Vision 2.2.7* (ed. and trans. Holmes, 464).

divine declared, “Blessed are all those who practice righteousness; they will never perish.... The Lord is near to those who turn to Him.”¹⁰ General eschatological teachings were again reaffirmed in this dream.

In *Vision 3*, however, some new thoughts of eschatology, which did not appear in the previous two dream narratives, were introduced into the doctrinal scene. For example, martyrs would be accorded a higher status in heaven after their martyrdom. Hermas was told in a dream that the glorious seat on the right-hand side of the divine was reserved for those who had suffered scourges, imprisonments, severe persecutions, crosses and wild beasts “for the sake of the Name.” On the other hand, there would be no salvation or place preserved for those who were children of iniquity and believed hypocritically, or those who had known the truth but did not abide it, or those who had something against one another in their hearts and were not at peace among themselves.¹¹

Among these new thoughts of eschatology, the demand on the affluent to care for the destitute before the imminent end of the world is very practical and remarkable. The female divine figure in Hermas’ third dream announced that the construction of the Lord’s tower (i.e. the Church) would be completed soon, and thus the end would come quickly. She then commanded:

Listen, my children,... look after one another and help one another, and do not partake of God’s creation by yourselves, but share abundantly with those in need. For some people are becoming ill from overeating and

¹⁰ *Vision 2.3.3-4* (ed. and trans. Holmes, 466). See *Similitude 9.25.2* (ed. Holmes, 664). For the passage of the faithful, cf. Matt 22:30; *1 Enoch* 104.4; *2 Baruch* 51.5-12. *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 5. Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 55, note 12.

¹¹ *Vision 3.1.9-3.2.1; 3.6.1-3* (ed. Holmes, 470-2; 480; quotation from 3.1.9). Hermas was invited to sit down on the left side. This seems to imply that he ranked after martyrs. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 384. For the right side as a symbol of honour, see Ps 110:1 (Acts 2:34); Matt 25:33-4; 26:64; Mark 14:62; Eph 1:20; Heb 1:3; *1 Clement* 36.5 (ed. M.W. Holmes, 92); *The Letter of Polycarp to the Philippians* 2.1 (ed. M.W. Holmes, 282).

damaging their flesh while the flesh of others who have no food is corrupted because they have not sufficient nourishment, and their bodies are perishing. This lack of community spirit is harmful to those of you who have, yet do not share with those who are needy. Give heed to the coming judgment. Let those who have more than enough seek out the hungry as long as the tower is not yet finished. For after the tower is finished, you will wish to do good, but you will find no opportunity.¹²

Similar divine commands frequently occur in other parts of *The Shepherd*.

For example, in one chapter, we read the divine dictation to “visit widows and orphans, and do not neglect them; and spend your wealth and all your possessions, which you received from God, on fields and houses of this kind. For to this end did the Master make you rich, so that you might perform these ministries for Him.... [do] your own task, and you will be saved.”¹³ Another chapter notes that “the rich with difficulty adhere to God’s servants, fearing lest they be asked for something by them. Such people therefore will enter the kingdom of God with difficulty.... But for all these repentance is open, but it must be quickly, so that what they did not do in former times they may now make up for in these days...”¹⁴

The divine even pointed out that the rich would be worthless to the Lord unless their wealth had been impoverished. The divine said to Hermas that many Christians “have faith, but also have riches of this world. Whenever persecution comes, they deny their Lord because of their riches and their business affairs.” Hence, when people’s “riches, which lead their souls astray, are cut away, then they will be

¹² *Vision* 3.9.1-6 (ed. and trans. Holmes, 486-8). Cf. Jas 5:1-4. Overeating, see *Mandate* 6.2.5; 8.3; 12.2.1 (ed. Holmes, 524; 528; 546); Luke 6:25. Justin wrote that “the rich among us come to the aid of the poor.” *Apologia* 1.67.1 (SC 507.308; trans. T.B. Falls, FC 6.106). Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry as Reflected in the Writings of Hermas, Clement and Ignatius*, 59-62, particularly 80, note 29.

¹³ *Similitude* 1.8-11 (ed. and trans. Holmes, 558). See *Mandate* 8.10 (ed. Holmes, 530); *Similitude* 5.3.7 (ed. Holmes, 574); Deut 14:29; Ezek 22:7; Jas 1:27.

¹⁴ *Similitude* 9.20.2-4 (ed. and trans. Holmes, 658). Also see *Similitude* 1.1-2; 2.1-10; 4.5; 8.9.1-4 (ed. Holmes, 556; 560-2; 566; 614); Matt 19:23-4; Mark 10:23-6; Luke 18:24-6.

useful to God.”¹⁵ In the eschatology of *The Shepherd*, wealth was utterly detrimental to the eternal life of wicked rich people, though ostensibly was helpful to their temporal life. It was nothing but the real stumbling block to faith.¹⁶

From these eschatologically harsh messages above, we may surmise the apathetic attitude of the rich towards the needy in Hermas’ community. It is not hard to conjecture that the issue of the transgressions and responsibilities of wealthy Christians occupies the second major concern in *The Shepherd* (besides the major one— postbaptismal sin and its forgiveness).¹⁷ Many Christians in this community were “economically comfortable, upwardly mobile,” but “inclined to find vigorous fidelity to the demands of religious visionaries uninteresting,” as Carolyn Osiek observes.¹⁸ They neglected their duty to share their abundance with those in need. If they could not be beneficial to the poor, then they would never be useful to the Lord. In consequence, their wealth soiled their faith and thus crippled their privilege of eternity. This socioeconomic or material concern reflects the practical dimension of Hermas’ eschatology, in which the mission of succouring the needy was divinely delegated through his dreams to Christians, particularly to the wealthy and church leaders.¹⁹

Nevertheless, what astonishes contemporary Christians most in Hermas’ eschatology is probably the teaching that the destitute were divinely empowered to

¹⁵ *Vision* 3.6.5-6 (ed. and trans. Holmes, 480-2).

¹⁶ Cf. Deut 8:12-4; Prov 30:3. For the idea that wealth makes the rich stumble into sin in the eschatological context, see Ezek 7:19; 16:49; 22:29; 34:17-22; Jas 5:1-5. Osiek, *Rich and Poor in the Shepherd of Hermas* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983), 51-2.

¹⁷ Michael Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1992, 3rd revised edition, 2007.), 443.

¹⁸ C. Osiek, “The Genre and Function of the Shepherd of Hermas.” In *Semeia* 36 (1986), 118.

¹⁹ *Vision* 3.9.1-10 (ed. Holmes, 486-8). Another remarkable command of socioeconomic practice, see *Similitude* 5.3.7 (ed. Holmes, 574). For the wealthy in Hermas’ community, see Maier, *The Social Setting*, 59-65. For a thorough study of Hermas’ economical and practical concerns, see Osiek, *Rich and Poor in the Shepherd of Hermas*.

intercede for the wealthy. In *Vision* 3, after commanding the rich to care for the poor, the divine then revealed the latter's power in the affairs of the former's redemption. The divine said, "Beware, therefore, you who exult in your wealth, lest those in need groan, and their groaning rise up to the Lord, and you together with your goods be shut outside the door of the tower (βλέπετε οὖν ὑμεῖς οἱ γαυρούμενοι ἐν τῷ πλούτῳ ὑμῶν, μήποτε στεναῶσιν οἱ ὑστερούμενοι, καὶ ὁ στεναγμὸς αὐτῶν ἀναβήσεται πρὸς τὸν κύριον, καὶ ἐκκλεισθήσεσθε μετὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ὑμῶν ἔξω τῆς θύρας τοῦ πύργου)."²⁰ That is, paupers, and in particular their groaning, could adversely affect the rich's obtainment of God's salvation.

Later, the Lord sent to Hermas the angel of repentance (i.e. the shepherd of Hermas) who bade him to write down the divine messages relayed to the Christian community. One of these messages spoke of the power of penniless Christians:

Listen, the rich have much wealth, but are poor in the matters relating to the Lord, being distracted by their wealth, and they have very little confession and prayer with the Lord, and what they do have is small and weak and has no power above.... And the poor, being provided for by the rich, pray for them, thanking God for those who share with them.... They both, then, complete their work: the poor work at intercession, being rich in this gift received from the Lord.... And the rich likewise unhesitatingly share with the poor the wealth that they receive from the Lord.... So also the poor, by appealing to the Lord on behalf of the rich, complement their wealth, and again, the rich, by aiding the poor in their necessities, complement their souls. So, then, both become partners in the righteous work. Therefore, the one who does these things will not be abandoned by God, but will be enrolled in the books of the living.²¹

²⁰ *Vision* 3.9.6 (ed. and trans. Holmes, 488). Cf. Exod 22:23-4; Deut 15:9; 24:15; Jas 5:4. (Pseudo-) Basil, *De Misericordia et Judicio* (PG 31.1709-12 [number 43-7]); FC 9.510). Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job* 16.5.6 (CCL 143A.800-1). Paterius, *Expositione Veteris ac Novi Testamenti* 5.17 (PL 79.781). People to be kept outside the door of the divine realm, see *Similitude* 9.12.1-8 (ed. Holmes, 642-4); Rev 21:27; 22:15; *Passio* 13.1-8 (SC 417.150-2).

²¹ *Similitude* 2.5-9 (ed. and trans. Holmes, 560-2). Cf. Exod 22:23, 27; Deut 24:13; Sir 4:6.

Through this divine teaching, the author of *The Shepherd* eschatologically reversed the conventional notion and impression of people's status. In his thought, the rich in the eschatological world were spiritually powerless and salvifically useless, in contrast with the poor. Their wealth would severely disable them from entering heaven if it had not been shared with the needy. On the other hand, the poor were immensely affluent and influential in the eschatological times. Their prayer and intercession with God could escort the rich into the heavenly gate. If the rich materially helped the poor, and in return the latter spiritually assisted the former, then this collaboration would accomplish their respective eschatological capacity.²²

This eschatological teaching identified all Christians, including the lowly and the needy, as God's servants. Each of them were assigned the task of social, spiritual and salvific participation as their eschatological mission in the last days, a short period of time remaining until the imminent end of the world. No one could abdicate one's duty to take part in the construction of the Church and the acceleration of the arrival of God's Kingdom. It obligated the rich to care for the poor, while enabling the latter to intercede for the former. These two groups of people, previously segregated and antagonised by economical or social status, were now eschatologically unified and became indivisible co-workers in the divine enterprise.

Doctrinally and contextually, this eschatological teaching developed a sacred

²² Osiek remarks that this teaching is "a spiritualization of the institution of patronage: the *obsequium* and *operae* owed by the client to a patron takes the form of intercessory prayer." She also notices the question as to whether this mutual relationship was to be worked out in Roman Christian community at the communal church level or in individual patron-client relationships. Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 163-4 and *Rich and Poor*, 15-38. See Luke 6:20-3; Acts 4:34-4. 1 Cor 1:27-8; 2 Cor 8:1-9:15; Jas 1:9; 2:5; Ignatius, *Epistle to Polycarp* 4.1-3 (ed. M.W. Holmes, 264-6); Hippolytus, *The Apostolic Tradition* 27-8 (ed. by G. Dix, 52-5); Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii Secundum Lucam* 5.53-69 (PL 15.1650-55); Ambrosiaster. *In Epistulas ad Corinthios* Prima 3.18-9 (PL 17.201; CSEL 81/2.39).

balance, a spiritual reciprocity and a salvific interdependence between two opposite social classes. It had no parallel in the teachings of *The Book of Revelation* and thus symbolised a key feature of *The Shepherd*. It may be a unique thought in early Christian theology.²³ This teaching is still imperative and enlightening for contemporary Christians, who live in a world in which we see the needy everywhere, and who also often wrongly presume the destitute to be incapable (or much less capable) of making contributions to the Church's ministry.

With the exception of this unique teaching, however, the two apocalyptic writings *The Shepherd* and *Revelation* had many eschatological ideas in common. For example, *Vision* 4 delineates a vision in which Hermas encountered a tremendous beast with four colours on his head (black, gold, white and the colour of fire and blood),²⁴ spewing fiery locusts out from his mouth. Recognising Hermas' true faith, the Lord dispatched the angel Thegri to protect him from the beast. Then the divine imparted its hidden meaning to Hermas, and also conveyed a message for the Christian community. The divine also enjoined him:

Go, therefore, and declare to the Lord's elect His mighty works, and tell them that this beast is a foreshadowing of the great tribulation that is coming. So, if you prepare yourselves in advance and turn to the Lord with all your heart, you will be able to escape it,... Trust in the Lord, you who doubt for he can do all things;... Woe to those who hear these words and despise them; better were it for them not to have been born.²⁵

This vision draws our attention particularly to several obvious parallels

²³ Osiek, *Rich and Poor*, 79-83.

²⁴ Cf. Dan 2:31-45; 7:3-14.

²⁵ *Vision* 4.2.5-6 (ed. and trans. Holmes, 498). Cf. *Vision* 2.2.7-8 (ed. Holmes, 464-5); Matt 26:24; Mark 14:21; 1 Thess 5:20. For the coming tribulation, cf. *Similitude* 3.1-4.8 (ed. Holmes, 564-6). For the angel who ruled over the devil, see *Mandate* 12.4.6-7 (ed. Holmes, 550-2).

between the apocalyptic narrative in *The Shepherd* and that in *Revelation*.²⁶ Firstly, with a similar literary technique to *Revelation*, *The Shepherd* portrayed imminent divine chastisement in order to intimidate its readers into repenting their sins, and at the same time to deliver divine promise and hope to them.²⁷ Humphrey aptly describes that the readers of *The Shepherd* “are left with a sense of something unfinished, something to come, both fearsome and redolent of hope.”²⁸ Additionally, the metaphors of the apocalypse (e.g. the beast’s attack as the impending tribulation), the characterisation of the righteous (e.g. faithful servants), and the descriptive fashioning of a catastrophic scene (e.g. this world to be destroyed by blood and fire) and divine admonition (e.g. repent and be saved) in *The Shepherd* resembled those in *Revelation*.²⁹ A beast and locusts in the former text are strongly reminiscent of the destructive characters in the latter.³⁰

Secondly, regarding eschatological beliefs, both *Revelation* and *The Shepherd* depicted that this world would be completely devastated, and no one (even God) could alter its ultimate fate. During the remaining days before the annihilation of this world, the calls for repentance and conversion would permeate everywhere. People would all be discriminated and redeemed in the apocalypse simply according to their

²⁶ Undoubtedly, there are also some differences in apocalyptic narrative between these two texts. The most remarkable one lies in the fact that Christ acted as a central figure in *Revelation* whereas He never appeared in *The Shepherd*. The name of either Jesus or Christ is found nowhere in *The Shepherd*. This was probably one of the main reasons why *The Shepherd* was eventually not included in the canonical books. For discussion, see Christian J. Wilson, *Five problems in the Interpretation of the Shepherd of Hermas* (N.Y.: Mellen, 1995).

²⁷ This literary technique used in *Revelation* and *The Shepherd* also characterised many apocalyptic writings in late antiquity, such as *1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra*. For study of the parallels between *Revelation* and *The Shepherd*, see E. M. Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities: Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in Joseph and Aseneth, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse and the Shepherd of Hermas* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 84-149.

²⁸ Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities*, 140. Lane Fox also observes that Hermas’ visions were beset with Christian hopes and fears, punishment and forgiveness. *Pagans and Christians*, 389.

²⁹ For these four resemblances between the two texts, cf. *Vision* 4.2.5-4.3.6 with Rev 12:3-13:18; *Vision* 4.2.4, 4.3.4-6 with Rev 7:13-17, 14:4-13; *Vision* 4.3.2 with Rev 8:7-8, 9:18, 16:3-9, 20:9; and *Vision* 4.2.5-6 with Rev 2:1-3:22, 11:15-18, 14:1-13, 18:4-8, 21:27-15, respectively.

³⁰ Rev 9:3-11; 12:3-13:18.

religious disposition and devotion. Frightening plagues would be given to the wicked and divine protection to the faithful. Those who underwent a terrifying ordeal without compromising their faith would be purified and be granted eternal life.³¹

To a certain extent, all these parallels illustrated above would avail Hermas' text in its reception and circulation within early Christian circles, since they rendered it noticeably concordant with the apocalyptic literature in the early Christian tradition and thus made it, as well as its doctrinal teachings, more easily identifiable as orthodox. In other words, by dream narratives, *The Shepherd* expressed eschatological thoughts; meanwhile, by reason of its theological and literary conformity with biblically apocalyptic convention, this dream text was doctrinally accepted among early churches. This is an oneirological-doctrinal reciprocation.

Besides this mutual support between dreams and eschatology, there are several other examples in *The Shepherd*. On the one hand, methodologically the author of *The Shepherd* through dream narratives heightened the eschatological tension between the miserable life in this sinful world and the blissful afterlife in heaven. Hermas' dreams revealed what people's eyes could not see in their waking state, such as the impending devastation of this world and the coming of God's kingdom (i.e. the finishing of the construction of the Church). They directed the attention of non-believers to the former event and that of believers to the latter. They upheld the eschatological faith and hope of Christians.

On the other hand, hermeneutically, the author's eschatology extended the realm of dreams into the future, the afterlife and endless eternity. It inset dreams with

³¹ Rev 6:9-11; 7:9-17; 9:3-21; 14:1-20; 20:4-21:1. Several eschatological teachings expressed in other biblical writings in the New Testament (e.g. Gal 6:1-10; Jas 4:1-5:11; 1 Pet 2:11-21) also find an echo in *The Shepherd*. For those in the Old Testament, cf. the apocalyptic tradition in *The Book of Ezekiel*.

divine promise and salvific dynamic. It also assigned them a critical role in the call for Christian fidelity, particularly as the Church was encountering great persecution. It thus integrated faith, hope and dreams together. Adding the practical dimension to its horizon, it eventually by means of dream narratives created a new theology in which the rich desperately needed help from the poor much more than the latter did from the former.

2. *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*

Passio was a Christian oneirological martyrology, recounting five dreams bestowed by the divine upon Perpetua (who acquired the first four dreams) and Saturus before their martyrdom. Most of the divine messages in these five dreams were spoken for Perpetua at the moment when she was kept in custody, owing to her confession of being a Christian, waiting for a public execution to soon take place at the amphitheater. Dreams played a significant part in her faith, her perseverance to embrace martyrdom, and her hope in divine promise. This dream text witnessed the powerful impact of dreams on the life of a Christian under the circumstances of severe persecution.

Through the divine words and consolations of her first dream, Perpetua, while apprehended, was able to hold onto her faith confidently in the midst of hardships and able to put all her trust in the Lord. After this dream, she then “ceased henceforth to have any hope in this world.”³² In her fourth dream she foresaw not only a saintly man who would be with her throughout her passion, but also the Lord who would be her trainer in fighting with the devil at the arena and would kiss her after she won her

³² *Passio* 4.10 (SC 417.118; trans. ANF 3.700). Augustine annotated that Perpetua and Felicitas “forsake the threats and the promises of the world; they press forward to the things before.” *Sermones* 280.4 (PL 38:1282; trans. W.H. Shewring, 27).

spiritual battle.³³ She also foreknew that she would finally march in triumph towards “the Gate of Life (*portam Sanauivariam*).”³⁴ After awakening from this dream, she said, “I knew that the victory was awaiting me (*sciebam mihi esse uictoriam*).”³⁵ Through the fifth dream, Perpetua received the divine promise that she would be rewarded with that which the Lord had prepared for her in heaven. Then she joyously awoke.³⁶ Drawing great strength from all these dreams, Perpetua was thence capable of approaching her martyrdom peacefully and even joyfully.³⁷

Emphatically, each time Perpetua awoke from a dream, her faith was stronger and her hope greater.³⁸ Dreams enabled her to posit herself not in this world but in the heavenly home, and to live not for herself but for her faith and for the Lord whom she had met in dreams. Hence, she could walk into the amphitheater without

³³ *Passio* 10.1-15 (SC 417.134-42). Polycarp also foresaw his martyrdom through a dream, see *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 5.2 (ed. M.W. Holmes, 310); Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.15.10 (SC 31.183). For the trainer of martyrs, cf. Tertullian, *Ad Martyras* 3.3-4 (CCL 1.5; trans. R. Arbesmann, FC 40.23): “You are about to enter a noble contest in which the living God acts the part of superintendent and the Holy Spirit is your trainer. And so your Master, Jesus Christ...to take you from a softer way of life to a harsher treatment that your strength may be increased.”

³⁴ *Passio* 10.13 (SC 417.140). The Gate of Life, or “the Gate of Sanavivaria,” was the gate by which victorious gladiators, or those whom the people spared, could make their exit. Dead combatants were carried out through the Gate of Libitina. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 119, note 12. Amat, *Passion de Perpétue et de Félicité* (SC 417), 230.

³⁵ *Passio* 10.14 (SC 417.142; trans. ANF 3.702).

³⁶ Ibid. 11-13 (SC 417.142-52). Cf. Aphrahat, *Demonstrationes* 8.19 (PS 1.396; SC 349.464), stating that the faithful Christians could see in their dreams what the Lord was about to give them in heaven and rejoice in their dreams; on the other hand, the wicked people’s dreams were not pleasant, and their heart was broken in dreams.

³⁷ *Passio* 18.1-3 (SC 417.164). As Peter Dronke observed, “The conclusions of the ladder dream, of the Dinocrates dreams, and of this combat dream, are all serene. In her dreaming, that is, Perpetua always triumphs in the *agôn* [struggle] she has set herself: to be brave enough to face death.” P. Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, 15. J. C. Robertson also remarks, “The martyrs [Perpetua and Felicitas] were comforted by dreams, which served to give them courage and strength to bear their suffering, by showing them visions of blessedness which was to follow.” J. C. Robertson, *Sketches of Church History, from AD33 to the Reformation* (NY: Edwin S. Gorham, 1904), 19.

³⁸ Marie-Louise von Franz notes, “As the outer destruction draws near, the comforting images in Perpetua’s dreams increased.” Maria-Louise von Franz, “Die Passio Perpetuae,” in *Aion: Untersuchungen zur Symbolgeschichte*, ed. C. G. Jung (Zürich: Rascher, 1951), 491; English translation, *The Passion of Perpetua* (Toronto: Inner City, 2004), 80. For dreams and hope, cf. Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.32 (GCS 7.22), in which Eusebius said that Constantine’s hope in God was fortified by a dream during his battle with his great enemy Maxentius. Also see Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes* 18.12 (PG 35.1000); Synesius of Cyrene, *De Insomniis* 8 (PG 66.1301-8). For a pagan example of gaining faith and hope from dreams, see Penelope’s dream in Homer, *Odyssey* 4.788-841 (LCL 104.176-80).

dread but with resplendent countenance, as if she were going to paradise, rather than to execution.³⁹ It was her dreams and their effect that helped Perpetua fulfill the martyr's role.⁴⁰

More phenomenally, by the power and dynamic of dreams, Perpetua "herself" seemed to be staying in the dream (or the dream world) at the moment when "her body" was devoured by a beast at the coliseum. She therefore could undergo torture without fear or losing composure, and even without pain. According to *Passio*, when another martyr told Perpetua that she was attacked by a fierce cow several times at the arena, she did not believe what this martyr said "until she had perceived certain signs of injury in her body and in her dress." This is because, at that moment, "she as if aroused from sleep, so deeply had she been in the Spirit and in an ecstasy (*et quasi a somno expergita - adeo in spiritu et in extasi fuerat*)."⁴¹

From this description we may infer that what Perpetua did on her way towards the beast was probably not to formulate a strategy for fighting the beast, as doing so would only cause panic and despair, but to recall her recent dreams and their divine messages (e.g. the presence of the Lord, her victory and heavenly reward) for this recollection could once more give her strength in the face of great suffering. This act of recalling dreams may somehow induce her into the state of ecstasy. Being in this state, she was then able to go through her passion as if going through a dream (either a previous dream which she had already had, such as the fourth dream in

³⁹ *Passio* 18.1-2 (SC 417.164). Cf. Pontius, *Vita Cypriani* 12-4 (CSEL 3/3.102-6), reporting Cyprian's nightly vision before his martyrdom.

⁴⁰ Cf. John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Acta Apostolorum* 51.1.11 (PG 60.353), in which John Chrysostom commentated that because of remembering a dream sent from God, Paul was the more confident to appeal before Caesar.

⁴¹ *Passio* 20.8-9 (SC 417.174; trans. ANF 3.705). For ecstasy, see Tertullian, *De Anima* 45.3; 47.3-4 (ed. J.H. Waszink, 62; 65-6).

which she won in fighting with the Egyptian at the amphitheater,⁴² or a current dream which just came to her in the state of ecstasy at the arena). Her dream not merely empowered her to withstand anguish, but also to transcend the grim reality during her martyrdom.

It seems that the Holy Spirit exercised the preternatural power of dreams in order to make Perpetua's body sense no pain, or liberate her from reality at the amphitheater. That is, this oneiric power transformed her feeling of pain into that of dreaming, or her state of reality into that of transcendental ideality. Here, dreams served Perpetua for a practical purpose as an analgesic, instead of a mere psychological purpose as a placebo.

From the perspective of Perpetua's true feeling, the reality may be that she was spiritually situated by the Holy Spirit in the dream world while she was physically present at the amphitheater.⁴³ When her body was sustaining serious injuries in this world, her mind, soul and spirit were together staying outside it tranquilly. The process of her martyrdom was proceeded by dreaming, not by suffering. The divine assistance to her, which was promised in the fourth dream, seemed to be really fulfilled at this moment. This assistance, exactly like the promise, was oneirically given and experienced.

Indeed, the Lord understood that Perpetua needed not only divine promise to raise her hope, but also divine strength to bolster her faith. The divine utilised dreams as a vessel to bring both to Perpetua. As divine promise and strength were oneirically delivered, her faith, hope and dreams became mutually supportive throughout the

⁴² Cf. *Passio* 18.7 (SC 417.166).

⁴³ Cf. Ezek 37:1-10; Tertullian, *Ad Martyras* 2.9 (CCL 1.5; trans. Arbesmann, 21): "Though the body is confined.... In spirit wander about, in spirit take a walk, setting before yourselves not shady promenades and long porticoes but that path which leads to God."

path of her martyrdom. It was also by dreams that the Lord mercifully led the last steps of her life in this world towards the heavenly place where He had prepared a reward for her, and where she had already seen and tasted the celestial things in dreams. Truly, these three remained at the closing stage of her life: faith, hope and dreams. The last one was probably greatest since it reinforced the former two.

Moreover, the dynamic of Perpetua's dreams neither catered for her alone, nor was it lost at the end of her martyrdom. Rather, it continued to impact on subsequent Christians from one generation to another by virtue of the dreamer who had been esteemed as an exemplar of Christian faith, and also her dream text which had been circulated as a canonical book in the early Church.⁴⁴ It even deeply affected the religious disposition of non-believers in Roman society. Expressing admiration for her faith and courage, Tertullian regarded Perpetua as "the most heroic martyr" who had the privilege of entering paradise immediately after death.⁴⁵ Augustine said that he himself and his congregation "are the fruits of their [Perpetua's and Felicitas'] labour."⁴⁶ Joel Harrington notes that the testimony of Perpetua and other martyrs, "perhaps even more than charismatic preaching and healing," inspired many bystanders to embrace Christianity themselves.⁴⁷

In other words, this dynamic deepened Perpetua's faith and shaped her testimony in the first place. Together with her legend, then, it created for the early Christian community a radically spiritual milieu, which promoted a public confession

⁴⁴ For discussion of *Passio* as a canonical book, see this thesis Chapter 5, note 26.

⁴⁵ Tertullian, *De Anima* 55.4 (ed. Waszink, 74). Similarly, Augustine identified Perpetua and Felicitas as "two most holy martyrs." *Sermones* 282.1 (*PL* 38:1285). Augustine also said that "for the prizes of martyrs, most beloved, we believe them to be the chiefest of all." *Sermones* 280.3 (*PL* 38:1281; trans. W.H. Shewring, 26).

⁴⁶ Augustine, *Sermones* 280.6 (*PL* 38:1283).

⁴⁷ Joel F. Harrington, *A Cloud of Witnesses* (NY: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 35.

of faith under great persecution.⁴⁸ When later Christians witnessed to their faith as Perpetua did, sooner or later they would sway the Roman religious world. In this regard, the conversion of numerous pagans may find its spiritual root in Perpetua's dreams, rather than in Perpetua's martyrdom, which was essentially the first fruit of her dreams.

In addition to its expression of the nature and function of dreams as reinforcing Perpetua's faith, *Passio* also reflects some eschatological beliefs of its dream narrators (i.e. Perpetua and Saturus) and particularly of its redactor (i.e. the author of its preface and concluding sections).⁴⁹ As Musurillo remarks, "it [*Passio*] is not only an account of the trial and sufferings of the African martyrs, but it is also an apocalypse in its own right, reminiscent of the book of Revelation and the *Shepherd of Hermas*."⁵⁰ It can enrich our understanding of some eschatological conceptions which were enthusiastically embraced by early Christians, as this dream text was widely celebrated in the early Church.

The redactor's eschatological endeavour was made explicitly clear in the preface of this dream text. Some of his contemporary Christians presupposed that new examples of divine miraculous works in the present were much less authoritative and important than those illustrated in the Scripture.⁵¹ However, in the preface the author polemically stated,

⁴⁸ Musurillo perceives that *Passio* is "the archetype of all later Acts of the Christian martyrs." *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, xxv. We may conjecture that Perpetua's legend had been highly influential in inspiring not only later Christian martyrs but also martyrologists.

⁴⁹ For discussion of the redactor, see Amat, *Passion de Perpétue et de Félicité*, 67-78; Barnes, *Tertullian*, 77-80; 265-6; C.I.M.I. Van Beek, *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* (Noviomagi: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1936), 92-6.

⁵⁰ Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, xxv. For discussion of the influence of *The Shepherd* on *Passio*, see Amat, *Passion de Perpétue*, 49-50. .

⁵¹ *Passio* 1.1-2 (SC 417.98-100). Cf. Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 19.1; 47.9 (CCL 1.119; 1.164).

Let those who would restrict the power of the one Spirit to times and seasons to take heed of this: the more recent events should be considered more eminent as being nearer to the very last times, in accordance with the exuberance of grace promised for the last stage of time. For “in the last days, says the Lord, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh and their sons and daughters shall prophecy..., and the young men shall see visions and the old men shall dream dreams.” So too we hold in honour and acknowledge not only new prophecies but new visions as well, according to the promise. And we consider all the other functions of the Holy Spirit as intended for the good of the Church; for the same Spirit has been sent to distribute all his gifts to all, as the Lord apportions to everyone.⁵²

What the redactor attempted to do here was firstly to vindicate this dream text by means of the eschatologisation of its temporal context. The redactor contended that the signs of the end of this world loomed up in a progressive sequence of the outstanding events orchestrated by the divine. The closer the end was, the greater and clearer its signs were. Perpetua’s and Saturus’ dreams emerged as one of the most distinct signs of the end of time. Correspondingly, people were now living in the last stage of this world, as well as in the whole new epoch in which the Holy Spirit operated among Christians more mightily than before.

As the audience of *Passio* was convinced that the end had arrived, they would more likely recognise its dream accounts as inspired by the Holy Spirit to show the fulfillment of the biblical words in Acts 2:17-8 (paraphrasing Joel 2:28-29), an eschatological passage describing the things that must occur in the last days. In this

⁵² *Passio* 1.3-5 (SC 417.100-2; trans. Musurillo, 107 and ANF 3.699). The author cited Acts 2:17-8 (paraphrasing Joel 2:28-29). Cf. Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.4.4; 5.8.6; 5.11.4; 5.17.4 (CCL 1.672; 1.687; 1.696; 1.713); *De Anima* 47.3 (ed. Waszink, 65); *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 10.2 (CCL 2.933). Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catecheses* 17.19 (PG 33.989-92); John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Acta Apostolorum* 5.1.18 (PG 60.50). For spiritual gifts, see Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:4-31, 14:12; 1 Pet 4:10-11. For new prophecy in Africa, see C. M. Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage*, 110-27. Rex Butler, *The New Prophecy and “New Visions”: Evidence of Montanism in The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 9-43.

recognition, they would also more likely adopt the eschatological teachings expressed by the dream text.

Secondly, the redactor identified Perpetua's and Saturus' dreams as a testimony of the realisation of the divine promise to invest the Church with all spiritual gifts. Because time was now approaching the very last moment, the Lord had endowed the Church with all the functions of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, every believer ought to exercise (at least) a certain spiritual gift. More new prophecies, visions, dreams or the like should appear everywhere in the Christian community.

Additionally, in the preface, the redactor stated that the accounts of the two martyrs' dreams and of their death for faith were written down "as a witness to the non-believers and a blessing to the faithful" in order that "God may be honored and humans may be strengthened."⁵³ For the redactor, Perpetua's and Saturus' dreams warned all humanity that the end of this world had already occurred in the present, rather than would be forthcoming. As to pagans, they must repent and convert to Christianity at once, for they would be brought before the court of the divine judgment at any moment.⁵⁴

As to Christians, they would inevitably suffer for their faith during this period, but God would, through dreams or visions, give them sufficient vigor to endure their impending agony just as He did for Perpetua. Martyrdom was a holy way of entering the heavenly Gate of Life and obtaining a more glorious crown from the divine.⁵⁵ The lives of martyrs, like that of Perpetua, not only honoured God but invigorated

⁵³ *Passio* 1.1; 1.5 (SC 417.98; 417.102; trans. Musurillo, 107).

⁵⁴ Ibid. 18.8 (SC 417.166-8).

⁵⁵ Ibid. 19.2 (SC 417.168). Cf. Hew 2:9; *The Shepherd, Vision* 3.1.9 (ed. Holmes, 470); Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam* 4.5 ("the greater our conflicts, the greater our rewards." CCL 2.1131; trans. S. Thelwall, ANF 3.107).

the faith of other Christians and inspired them to follow the steps of martyrs.⁵⁶

A reciprocal relationship between dreams and eschatology can now be appreciated. On the one hand, the two martyrs' dreams in *Passio*, which were granted by God when great persecution confronted them, were strongly reminiscent of biblically apocalyptic events and days, providing its redactor a perfect opening to contextually propose an eschatological agenda. The oneirological documents of *Passio* then developed an eschatological title and preface.

On the other hand, the redactor doctrinally interpreted these dreams as an apocalyptic sign of the end time of this world as well as of the new era of the Holy Spirit. The time at which these dreams occurred was eschatologised so as to biblically authorise these dreams and legitimise the dream text, including its preface. The eschatology of *Passio* also made every Christian into a prophet, a visionary or a dreamer. More new dreams would expectedly be related in every church as the dream text was spread everywhere in early Christianity. By so doing, this eschatology temporally as well as spatially expanded the province of Christian oneirology to its extremity.

3. Evodius

In his letter to Augustine (written about 415) Evodius, the Bishop of Uzala, related several dreams which he had or of which he had heard.⁵⁷ From this letter, we may ascertain how some eschatological convictions can be diffused by dream reports. The examination of his first dream report suffices for our purpose.⁵⁸ This dream

⁵⁶ Cf. *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 3 (ed. Holmes, 308-10).

⁵⁷ Augustine, *Epistula* 158 (CSEL 44.488-97). Other letters between Augustine and Evodius, see *Epistula* 159-164 (CSEL 44.497-541). For Evodius' identity, see Augustine, *Confessiones* 9.8.17 (BA 14.102).

⁵⁸ For other dream reports, see *Epistula* 158.9-11 (CSEL 44.494-6).

report comprises two parts: an introduction and a dream narrative, both composed by the bishop.

The first part of the dream report described that the bishop had a certain youth as a clerk, who was a son of the priest Armenius of Melonita, and whose virtuous life was adorned with a dignified and reserved demeanor. He was devoted to reading the Scripture and seeking truth, and was a compliant and delightful servant of the bishop. He had never been defiled with a woman in his entire life.

Unfortunately, this godly clerk died at the age of twenty-two due to sickness.⁵⁹

Two days after his death, Urbica, a widow and an honourable lady of Figes, reported to the bishop that she had had a dream.⁶⁰ In this dream a deacon who departed this life four years ago was preparing a beautiful and bright palace in company with many servants and handmaids of God. She asked for whom the preparations were being made. The deacon answered, for the clerk whose body died yesterday. Then in the same palace there appeared an old man, sending two white-clad individuals to carry the clerk's body from the world to heaven. As soon as his body "had been taken from the tomb and raised up to the heaven, branches of virgin roses— that is what unopened flowers are usually called— grew up from the same tomb (*de sepulcro corpus fuisset adsumptum atque in caelum leuatum, rami rosarum uirginum— sic enim clausae appellari solent— de eodem sepulcro surrexisse*)."⁶¹

This dream report as a whole suggested three eschatological ideas which found no echo in the Bible. Firstly, a personal palace would be set up in heaven by

⁵⁹ Ibid. 158.1-2 (CSEL 44.488-90).

⁶⁰ A divine-inspired dream given to a religious woman, cf. *Confessiones* 3.11.19; 6.1.1; 6.13.23 (BA 13.398-400; 13.514-8; 13.566); *De Civitate Dei* 22.8.4 (BA 37.568-70); *De Cura pro Mortuis Gerenda* 17.21 (BA 2.514-8).

⁶¹ *Epistula* 158.3 (CSEL 44.490; trans. W. Parsons, FC 20.356). Cf. Gregory the Great, *Dialogorum* 4.49.4-5 (SC 265.170).

the domestics of God, who had died earlier, for a devout Christian, who had died recently. Noteworthy, this report told that not only the souls of the devout, but their bodies as well would be brought to heaven, whereas the Scripture taught that only their souls could go there while their bodies would still stay (or sleep) in this world, waiting for the bodily resurrection at Parousia.⁶²

The second idea was that the power of the godly, even if only during the very short moment of their departure from this world, could greatly affect the natural world, such as by fertilising vegetation rapidly. Predictably, if a saintly man was buried in a certain field, its harvest would always be attributed to his divine capacity by its Christian landlord under the inspiration of this idea. Nurtured by, or living in, the cultural setting in which the tradition of sainthood was based on this kind of idea, Christians in the Middle Ages would not be surprised to hear more and more miraculous deeds of the saints towards nature reported by later hagiologies, including preaching to birds and communicating with wolves.⁶³

Thirdly, and more importantly, eschatological hope now focused not on the divine promises of the impending end of this world, the glorious coming of Christ, the Last Judgment or the eternal life, but on the divine reward of a heavenly splendid palace.⁶⁴ Eschatological merit depended on moral virtues (e.g. virginity and chastity), the passion for biblical truth or absolute obedience to church authority, rather than on the confession of faith, suffering in persecution or zeal for martyrdom. Devotees may even rank higher than martyrs, as there was no reason to be martyred. It seems that

⁶² 1 Cor 15:50-54; 2 Cor 5:1-8; Phil 1:21-23; 1 Thess 4:13-18.

⁶³ Bonaventure, *The Life of St Francis of Assisi* (Rockford, Illinois: TAN Books and Publishers, 1988), 78–85. For a classical study of the tradition of sainthood and the legends and cults of the saints, see Raymond Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

⁶⁴ The conventional reward of being with the Lord eternally in heaven seemed not to be enough. A personal, beautiful mansion then appeared in the eschatological landscape.

the core beliefs of eschatology were paradigmatically shifted as the Church began to enjoy a special privileged position, as Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire and as Christians were no longer the persecuted but persecutors.⁶⁵

The bishop, by relating a dream and writing an ingenious introduction of the main character in that dream, could together form a piece of doctrinal propaganda of his eschatology. On the other hand, his eschatological articulation was the keynote of his entire dream report. From his characterisation of the clerk as a devout and virtuous Christian in this dream report, and also from his argument with Augustine in this letter, we may conceive both that he deemed the honourable widow's dream as a divine message, and that he would publically read his dream report (surely including his introduction) to his congregation. Sooner or later, and by means of this dream report, his eschatological beliefs would scatter over his community of faith. Evidently, there is a propagational and interdependent relationship between dreams and eschatology in his dream report.

4. Gregory the Great

Gregory the Great produced three dream reports which bear a striking resemblance to Bishop Evodius' reports in terms of their structure, their content and their eschatological intention. Each of Gregory's dream reports also has two parts: a description of a monk's virtues and the narrative of a dream or two which he had before death.⁶⁶ His eschatological approach to interpreting dreams can be discerned

⁶⁵ For discussion of the paradigm shift in eschatological thoughts when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, see Brian E. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991; Peabody, M.A.: Hendrickson, 2003), 69- 92.

⁶⁶ All the visions in Gregory's reports were actually dreams not only because they all occurred at night, but because right after these reports (in next chapter) Gregory called these nightly visions "dreams (*somniorum*)" and also began to explain his dream theory. *Dialogorum* 4.50 (SC 265.172-6). For Gregory's dream theory, also see *Moralia in Job* 8.24.42 (CCL 143.413-4) .

in particular from his opening remarks for these reports, and also in the way he linked the dreamers' piety, their dreams and their death together.

According to his first report, a monk by the name of Anthony lived in Gregory's monastery. "With greatest devotion and spiritual longing," he meditated on the Scripture, not looking for wisdom, but for tears of compunction. He left the world behind and rose in contemplation to God's kingdom. One night, he was told in a dream to prepare himself to leave on a journey because God had ordered it. Yet he was moved with fear and trembling after this dream. Hence, "he was again admonished in the same way the next night." Then, after five days, he took sick and died.⁶⁷

The second dream report sketched that Merulus, also a monk in Gregory's monastery, frequently devoted himself generously to almsdeeds. His lips were always moving in prayer. He constantly recited the psalms, hardly ever ceasing except during mealtimes and sleep. He had a dream, in which a garland of white flowers came down from heaven and rested on his head. Shortly after, he died very peacefully and happily. Fourteen years later, when the abbot of the monastery visited Merulus' tomb, he noticed that "the air was heavy with a fragrance rising from the tomb. It was as if the perfume of every flower had been stored there."⁶⁸

The dreamer in the third report was John, another monk in Gregory's monastery. He was endowed with understanding, humility, meekness and gravity.

⁶⁷ *Dialogorum* 4.49.2-3 (SC 265.168-70; trans. O.J. Zimmerman, FC 39.259).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 4.49.4-5 (SC 265.170; trans. Zimmerman, 260). For tireless prayer and generous works of charity, see 4.14.3; 4.16.2. For the saints spread a fragrant odor at death, see 4.15.5 (the holy man Servulus [SC 265.62]); 4.16.5 (the devout sister Romula [SC 265.64-6]); 4.17.2 (Gregory's aunt Tarsilla [SC 265.68]). The miracle of the flowers around the saint's tome, cf. Augustine, *Epistula* 158.3 (CSEL 44.490). Regarding dreams and the martyr's tomb, Theodoret of Cyrrhus related that under the command of a dream, Chrysostom's body was buried by the side of the martyr Basiliscus. *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.34 (SC 530.468-72). For discussion, see Jean Bouffartigue, *Théodoret de Cyr: Histoire Ecclésiastique* (SC 530), 473, note 3.

During a severe illness which brought him to death's door, an old man said to him in a dream, "Arise, this sickness shall not be the cause of your death. But be prepared, for you have not long to love in this world." He suddenly became well even though the doctors had despaired of his life. For the following two years he devoted himself to God's service with zeal, before passing away the very next year.⁶⁹

Gregory's reports represented at least four eschatological teachings,⁷⁰ two of which (the third and fourth) have counterparts in Evodius' reports. First of all, the saintly would reap the divine reward for their virtuous life of heavenly rapturous reception with a glorious wreath and garment. Gregory patently highlighted this idea through his opening remark for these reports: "a saintly man... after his death he appeared to his followers in a white robe and told them of the wonderful welcome he had received (*sed post mortem discipulis in stola alba apparuit, et quam praeclare sit susceptus indicavit*)."⁷¹ In his dream reports, all the dreamers were monks and devout Christians. Their death was arranged by God in order that they could go to their heavenly home.⁷² They would "enjoy the pleasure of eternal recompense from the very moment of the dissolution of the flesh."⁷³ Accordingly, dreams heralded their departure from this life,⁷⁴ and death their acquisition of divine reward.

Secondly, God would console the dying saints with divine message through

⁶⁹ *Dialogorum* 4.49.6-7 (SC 265.170-2; trans. Zimmerman, 260).

⁷⁰ For Gregory's eschatology, see Kevin L. Hester, *Eschatology and Pain in St. Gregory the Great* (Bletchley: Paternoster Press, 2007), 21-54; Brian Daley, *Eschatologie in der Schrift und Patristik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1986), 245-8.

⁷¹ *Dialogorum* 4.48 (SC 265.168; trans. Zimmerman, 259).

⁷² Cf. *Dialogorum* 4.14.3-4 ("When God decreed to grant her an eternal reward for her labours, she was afflicted with cancer of the breast.... On the third day, Galla died...." [SC 265.56-8; trans. Zimmerman, 206-7]).

⁷³ *Moralia in Job* 24.11.34 (CCL 143B.1213; trans. LF 23.76).

⁷⁴ See Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.2 (SC 495.250-6). According to Sozomen, the death of the Emperor Julian was arranged by God under divine wrath and foreshadowed by a dream. Also cf. *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.16 (SC 495.316-22): the death of the Emperor Valens' son.

dreams or other revelatory means.⁷⁵ He knew that the very dread could grip even the soul of a godly monk as he was departing. Thus, Gregory pointed out (also in his opening remark), “God strengthens timid souls with timely revelations in order to keep them from all fear at the moment of death.”⁷⁶ Here again, dreams can be viewed as the dynamic to reinforcing the faith of dying Christians.

The third eschatological thought is that after fourteen years of his death, a devout monk (or his relics or his tomb) could somehow still exercise a mysterious power which was even able to convert the air and its smell around his tomb. He could even manifest himself to his disciples simply for the purpose of showing them that he had been well entertained after death.⁷⁷ This may eschatologically imply that the saints were capable of crossing over the great chasm fixed between the dead and the living.⁷⁸

Finally, humbleness, benevolence, solemnity, prayers, meditations, recitations of biblical words and dedication to ministry, instead of martyrdom, converting non-believers or performing spiritual gifts (e.g. prophecy and healing the sick), were appraised as eschatological feats. The end of every believer’s life had been predetermined by God. Christians ought to redeem the time, devoting their energy and money to the service of God’s kingdom, the Church.

We may detect a reciprocal relationship between dreams and eschatology in

⁷⁵ See Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 8.24.1-3 (SC 516.336-8). Sozomen wrote that Stephen the Martyr appeared as a man, conspicuous for beauty and stature, to Sisinius, the bishop of the Novatians, concerning the devout Christian, Eutropius, who was dying at that moment. The bishop immediately transmitted his dream message to Eutropius.

⁷⁶ *Dialogorum* 4.49.1 (SC 265.168; trans. Zimmerman, 259). See 4.12.5 (Gregory said, “It often happens that the saints of heaven appear to the just at the hour of death in order to reassure them. And, with the vision of the heavenly company before their minds, they die without experiencing any fear or agony.” [SC 265.52; trans. Zimmerman, 204]) and 4.14.4 (reporting Galla saw Peter the Apostle in her dream before her death. [SC 265.58]). For Galla’s oneiric encounter with Peter, see Adalbert de Vogüé, *Grégoire le Grand: Dialogues*, Tome III (SC 265), 57, note 4.

⁷⁷ Augustine totally rejected the idea that the dead could appear to the living, either through dreams or by other means. *De Cura pro Mortuis Gerenda* 10.12-12.15 (BA 2.490-502).

⁷⁸ Cf. Luke 16:26.

Gregory's dream reports, similar to that in Bishop Evodius' reports. Through his reports of the monks' dreams, Gregory set an eschatological example of what a Christian should be in this world, and what his or her afterlife would be in the heavenly world.⁷⁹ On the other hand, through his eschatological interpretations of these dreams, and particularly through his eschatological opening remark, he labeled dreams as a prophet foretelling the imminent death of the saints, and also as their comforter during the last days of their life.⁸⁰

Conclusion

Many early Christians, particularly those before the fourth century, had to face not only oppression or persecution, but also incarceration and execution. As they approached death, their faith could become weakened, and a feeling of desperation could arise. This situation increased the great demand for divine comfort and assurances to be given directly to them before they died for faith. Before long, the writings in the Church abounded with the testimonies of how God sent dreams, visions or other means to strengthen the faith of the martyrs and to nourish their hope in God's promise.

Surely, early Christians had faith in God, but they also needed hope to consolidate their faith. The Hebrew Bible illustrated that before the fulfillment of divine promises, God often spoke to His people by various means, including the pillar of fire or wonders and miracles, so as to sustain their faith and give them hope.

Dreams in several patristic texts functioned in the same way and with the same aim

⁷⁹ For discussion of Gregory's use of the saints' miraculous legends and his interpretative purpose, see Joan M. Petersen, *The Dialogues of Gregory the Great in their Late Antique Cultural Background* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), 1-55.

⁸⁰ For another patristic example of interpreting dreams in the eschatological context, see Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes* 7.21 (PG 35.784). For discussion of Gregory of Nazianzus' interpretation, see Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 232-6.

in mind. These texts attested that several Christians valiantly embraced suffering and martyrdom without fear owing to dreams in which they met the Lord or heard divine words. As Basil said, “[even] to see loved objects in a dream brings those who love some comfort.”⁸¹

If God’s promise was the hope of early Christians, and if that hope was the strength which braced their faith, then dreams could be understood as an important dynamic that rooted their faith deeply on the soil of that hope. Dreams displayed their property of kratophany (the divine manifesting divine power to humanity through a non-person form)⁸² by which God disclosed His presence to His people. Illusive dreams thus became the incarnation of divine promise and hope.

Additionally, dreams were the place where the future promise of God could be tasted in the present. For instance, Perpetua, in dreams, was taken to heaven to partake of heavenly food in a garden (in the first dream) as well as to kiss the Lord in a bright palace (in the fifth dream). Once early Christians experienced a part of the divine promise by dreams, they would very likely never question its perfect fulfillment in the future.

After early Christianity acquired a legal status in the Roman Empire, the capacity of martyrs was virtually replaced by that of the devout. Nonetheless, in this period dreams performed a similar role as before. They now appeared mostly for the saintly and largely in hagiology. Their goal was mainly to inform the devout Christians of their impending death, as well as to assist them to prepare for their departure from this world by adding strength to their faith. To a certain extent, dreams in hagiology functionally paralleled those in martyrology. Hence, the nature

⁸¹ Basil, *Epistula* 157 (ed. Y. Courtonne, [Tome II] 84; trans, *NPNF* 8.211).

⁸² From Greek κράτος (strength; power). For explanation of the terms kratophany, see Mircea Eliade, *Le Sacré et le Profane*, chapter one.

of dreams, according to patristic writings written either before Christianity became a predominant religion or after, can be conceived of as the dynamic of faith reinforcement.

Moreover, whereas dreams were used by the divine to intensify people's faith and hope, they were utilised by the four authors (including redactors)⁸³ of the dream texts analysed in this chapter to articulate eschatological beliefs. The first two authors (living in a time when their religion was persecuted) were primarily concerned with what people must do and what the Church ought to be in the last days; the other two authors (living in a time when Christianity was a state religion) were preoccupied with what the saints could do after death.

Through his dream text *The Shepherd*, the author warned that the end time was near; every one must repent and return to God so as to escape from the imminent calamities, which was metaphorically presaged by his dreams. His eschatological requirement spoke of both spiritual and practical dimensions. Spiritually it urged people outside the Church to repent and encouraged those inside to remain. Practically it demanded that the rich in the Church materially attend to the poor Christians, while empowering the latter to intercede spiritually for the former.

The eschatological thoughts of the dream diary *Passio* were exposed clearly in its editorial activity. Its redactor proclaimed that the end of this world had already arrived and thus the era of the Holy Spirit had commenced. Since all spiritual gifts had been given to Christians, the reports of new prophecies, visions and dreams should be frequently heard in the Church. Church leaders as well as lay Christians ought to appreciate the significance of these new spiritual phenomena.

⁸³ Again, *The Shepherd* or *Passio* was probably not written by a single author. But for the convenience of discussion, in this chapter I assume that each text in its final form was created by one "author (writer, redactor or otherwise)."

In spite of several differences in eschatology between them, *The Shepherd* and *Passio* shared some similar ideas. For example, martyrs attained more glorious seats in heaven. Glory and eternity necessitated martyrdom. The route of suffering for faith led Christians to the state of spiritual purity and perfection. Blessed were those who persevere under trial and persecution. Also, in both texts, apocalyptic concerns pervade while God's power and promise prevail.

The traditional focal points of eschatology were shifted in the dream reports of both Bishop Evodius and Gregory the Great. In their eschatological drama, written by dream reports, the protagonist who faced an impending death was now not a martyr, but a saint, for whom the best divine reward, a heavenly palace, was reserved. Christian virtues revolved around virginity, abstinence, pursuit of biblical truth and obedience to church authority, rather than suffering or passion. The common eschatological scenes were the tombs of the saintly and the manifestation of their power after death (either the power of the saints or that of their tombs or relics), instead of apocalyptic catastrophes or divine judgment.

We may recognise a reciprocal relationship between dreams and eschatology in these four dream texts. Dream narratives or reports methodologically enabled these four authors to foreshadow the things about to happen in the future, or in another world (either in hell or in heaven). They embodied the eschatological contrast between the present suffering and the coming glory, between death and eternity, between the sinners and the saints, and between earthly devoutness and heavenly reward. In this way, they facilitated the authors' dissemination of their eschatology.

On the other hand, the eschatology of these authors hermeneutically augmented the realm of dreams from their individual and nightly space to communal

and heavenly. It adorned the content of early Christian dreams with typically (and biblically) apocalyptic characters or images, including an enormous beast, detrimental locusts and the annihilation of this sinful world. It transformed the illusory and transient nature of dreams into the dynamic. The doctrinal thoughts expressed in *The Shepherd* even marked the birth of a new theology that attempted to establish an equilibrium between economically antagonistic groups of people, the wealthy and the destitute. These two opposite communities were therefore eschatologically reconciled and interdependent.

While dreams preoccupied the minds of Greeks and Romans, they predisposed the patristic readership to being faithful and devout. Greco-Roman oneirology may occasionally concern hope, but hardly in the eschatological context,⁸⁴ whereas patristic oneirology issued many dreams to that end in that context. Faith, hope and dreams in early Christian writings were closely intertwined and mutually reliant through eschatology. Indeed, we cannot reach a thorough understanding of the divinely-inspired dreams in patristic texts, which were given to those under persecution or to martyrs and saints before their death, without studying these dreams and their reports in their eschatological context. In return, that understanding can highly enrich our acquaintance with patristic eschatology.

⁸⁴ For discussion, see Appendix A of this thesis.

Conclusion

This will be sufficient for those dreams to which we must believe, even though we have a different interpretation of their nature.
— Tertullian, *De Anima* 46.12.

1. Patristic Oneirology

For the ancients, the domain of dreams was very likely the most mysterious and phenomenal realm in human life. It nurtured many fascinating legends. Almost every literature in antiquity contains certain dream accounts which have enthralled both ancient and modern people. In the classical world, a dream frequently occurred before the beginning, or near the end, of a noble life, a decisive war, a new kingdom or a great empire. Dreams ushered multitudinous turning points into ancient history.¹

Numerous Greco-Roman, Hellenistic Jewish, biblical and patristic writers endeavoured to relate dreams and expound their mechanics, teleology and ontology. All their efforts contributed to the establishment and development of a dream tradition, or an oneirology, for the community they belonged. Among these four traditions, Greco-Roman and patristic oneirologies are very much the most remarkable for their conceptualisation and theorisation of dreams and their phenomena. In addition, patristic literature not only holds more dream accounts than Hellenistic Jewish and biblical literatures combined, but also probably more

¹ For discussion, see Appendix A of this thesis.

theoretical discourses on dreams than any of the other three.² However, among them, it is the patristic dream tradition that has received the least attention from modern scholars, who have not yet produced a book or monograph devoted entirely to this study. This thesis attempts to remedy this deficiency.

The patristic dream tradition was rooted primarily in the works of the authors of *The Shepherd of Hermas* and *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, and in the writings of Tertullian, Cyprian, Lactantius, Eusebius, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius Ponticus, Jerome, John Chrysostom, Bishop Evodius, Augustine, John Cassian, Sulpicius Severus and Gregory the Great. Although some of these writers were not church fathers, their writings can still be considered as patristic texts because they were endorsed, cited or identified by some church fathers or the early Christian community as authoritative texts. An early Christian dream theory can be constructed out of all these writers' dream reports, commentaries and discussions. Additionally, a Christian language of dreams can be created on the basis of the terminologies and notions they provided.

Dreams in these writers' texts can generally be classified into three categories: human-inspired, demon-inspired and divinely-inspired dreams. In these texts, the nature of the first type of dreams can be reckoned as the creations of the soul's movement, as the indicators of the dreamer's physical, mental or psychical state and as the reflection of the dreamer's regressive morality. The nature of the second type of dreams can be regarded as a diabolical means of terrifying, tempting and deceiving humanity. The nature of the third type of dreams can be deemed as a sacred site in which the Lord manifests Himself to dreamers, as the divine messages by which God speaks to humans and as the dynamic through which the divine

² For Greco-Roman, Hellenistic Jewish and biblical dream traditions, see Appendix A, B and C.

reinforced people's faith.

2. Similarities and Differences among Oneirologies in Late Antiquity

Here it is appropriate to briefly summarise some similarities and differences among Greco-Roman, Hellenistic Jewish, biblical and patristic dream traditions. These four traditions shared several conventional thoughts with one another, while each one maintained certain unique views. Firstly, biblical and patristic writers, unlike Greco-Roman or Jewish writers,³ produced neither an encyclopedic dream book nor a book or treatise devoted simply to the subject of dreams.⁴ Secondly, several Greco-Roman and patristic writers strove to formulate a dream typology and theory.⁵ Philo was perhaps the only early Jewish writer to propose a dream classification. Biblical writers remained totally indifferent towards dream taxonomy or theory.

Thirdly, only in Greco-Roman and patristic literatures,⁶ and never in the other two, were dreams physiologically related to the pure phenomenon of human sleep, the phenomenon naturally caused by inward operation of bodily faculties. Accordingly, dreams could be considered as the signifier of the dreamer's physical state. Fourthly, both demon-inspired dreams and remedial dreams were impressively described in Greco-Roman and patristic writings,⁷ but were totally absent in either

³ Such as Artemidorus (his encyclopedic dream book *Oneirocritica*), Aristotle (his treatise *De Insomniis*) and Philo of Alexandria (his treatise *De Somniis*).

⁴ Synesius of Cyrene wrote a treatise entitled *De Insomniis*. However, this treatise was composed when he was still a pagan, as Le Goff correctly observes. Therefore, it cannot be considered as a patristic text. See Le Goff, *L'imaginaire Médiéval*, 278.

⁵ Such as Posidonius, Artemidorus and Macrobius; Tertullian, Augustine and Gregory the Great.

⁶ For example, in Galen's *De Dignotione ex Insomniis* (ed. K.G. Kühn, *Opera omnia Claudii Galeni*, 832-5) and in Gregory of Nyssa's *De Hominis Opificio* 13 (ed. G.H. Forbes, 172-88).

⁷ For examples, Aristides's *Oratio* 47- 48 (trans. C.A. Behr, 278-307) and Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* 1.17.8 (LCL 58.24); Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* 22.8 .2-6 (BA 37.560-72) and Evagrius' *De Diversis Malignis Cogitationibus* 28 (SC 438 252-4).

Hellenistic Jewish or biblical texts, in which even nightmares were engendered by the divine, rather than the devil.⁸

Fifthly, sexual dreams were straightforwardly recounted and negatively appraised only by Hellenistic Jewish and patristic writers.⁹ Similarly, the narratives concerning dreamers experiencing heavenly journeys arose in Hellenistic Jewish and patristic texts,¹⁰ but not in Greco-Roman or biblical texts. Sixthly, each of the four traditions preserved numerous accounts of dream epiphany. Nevertheless, Greco-Roman and patristic dreamers yearned to describe the physical appearance of the divine seen by them in dreams,¹¹ whereas the dreamers in the other two traditions never desired to do so, although they even directly saw and conversed with the divine face to face in dreams.

Seventhly, most dreams in any of these four traditions served as a vehicle to carry, or as a venue to announce, essential messages, no matter who the messenger was or where the dream originated from (e.g. from the divine, the angels, the dead or some unknown source) or how the messages were presented (e.g. in the symbolic or auditory form, or in a form combining both). The imparted dream messages, which included prophecy, guidance, divine sanction, promise and revelation, were all vitally important to the dreamers, their family, their community, or even their nation or empire.¹²

Eighthly, the notion that the dead were able to appear and convey messages to

⁸ Job 7:14; 33:15-18, Sir 40:5-7 and Wisdom of Solomon 18:13-19.

⁹ Philo, *Jewish Antiquities* 17.165-167; Augustine, *Confessiones* 10.30.41 (BA 14.212-4).

¹⁰ *I Enoch* 13-36, 83-90; *Testament of Levi* 2:5-3:5; *Passio* 4.8-10; 12.1-13.8 (SC 417.116-8; 417.146-52).

¹¹ For examples, the divine appearance was portrayed as marvelously handsome in Aristides' *Oratio* (49.46; 50.40 [trans. Behr, 316; 326]), as exceedingly beautiful lady in *The Shepherd (Vision* 3.10.5 [ed. M.W. Holmes, 490]), and as a grey-haired man in *Passio* (4.8 [SC 417.116]).

¹² For discussion, see Chapter 6 and Appendix A, B and C.

the living in dreams was typical of Greco-Roman literature,¹³ and was also embraced by some Hellenistic Jewish and patristic writers.¹⁴ Nonetheless, it was flatly rejected in the Bible. Likewise, the oneiric content of female dreamers survived in all the dream traditions except the biblical one.¹⁵

Ninthly, the accounts of incubation-dreams can be found in all four literatures,¹⁶ although the practice of dream incubation was prohibited in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁷ Some of these dreams occurred without the intention of their dreamers.¹⁸ Cases such as this (often called involuntary or unintentional incubation) happened when one did not deliberately practice incubation but received a crucial message directly from the divine, a saint or the like, through a dream which had taken place in a sacred place, such as a temple, shrine, tomb or church. However, unlike Greco-Roman and patristic dreamers, Jewish and biblical dreamers never provoked dreams by reason of physical illness.

It is evident that patristic oneirology bears a stronger resemblance to Greco-Roman oneirology, and Hellenistic Jewish oneirology to biblical. Undoubtedly, patristic oneirology was fostered by Jewish and biblical dream traditions in the first instance; but it was then more deeply inspired and shaped by Greco-Roman

¹³ See Homer's *Iliad* 23.62-160 (LCL 171.496-504) and Virgil's *Aeneid* 2.268-297 (LCL 63.334-6).

¹⁴ Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 2.114-116 and *Jewish Antiquities* 17.349-353; Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.5.7 (SC 41.93) and Gregory the Great, *Dialogorum* 4.49 (SC 265.168-72).

¹⁵ Matt 27:19 mentions the dream of Pilate's wife (the sole female dreamer in the Bible) but does not provided its content.

¹⁶ For collections of Greco-Roman examples of incubation-dreams, see E. J. Edelstein and L. Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 414-442. For Hellenistic Jewish examples, see Philo, *Jewish Antiquities* 11.313-339; 2 *Baruch* 34-36 and 2 *Enoch* 70:1-13. In the Bible, King Solomon's dream in Gibeon (1 Kings 3:5; 2 Chron 1:5) very likely resulted in the practice of dream incubation. See Ernst L. Ehrlich, *Der Traum im Alten Testament*, 19-26; Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East*, 187-188. For patristic examples, see Gregory of Tours, *De Virtutibus Sancti Martini* 2.4; 2.23 (PL 71.941-2; 950-1); *De Virtutibus Sancti Juliani* 9; 23-24 (PL 71.807; 815-6).

¹⁷ Isa 65:4. For discussion, see Jean-Marie Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World*, 1725-6.

¹⁸ For examples, see 1 Sam 3:2-15; Gregory of Tours, *De Virtutibus Sancti Martini* 2.4 (PL 71.941-2).

oneirology and eventually developed a dream tradition containing many ideas which found no echo in Jewish and biblical oneirologies.

3. Patristic Oneirology in Attendance on Early Christian Doctrines

Despite being heavily influenced by the Greco-Roman dream tradition, most early Christian writers, unlike pagan authors, manipulated dreams by doctrines, rather than by philosophical, psychological or medical analysis. In fact, what differentiates patristic oneirology most profoundly from other ancient oneirologies is its doctrinal essence and attempts.¹⁹ In the early Church, when the theological atmosphere became doctrinally exclusive and aggressive, every domain of human life turned into a battleground for dogmatic fighting. The domain of dreams did not escape from being embroiled in this war. Rather, this domain, probably because of its mysterious nature as well as its being reminiscent of pagan, Jewish and biblical traditions, grew into one of the most popular fields in which doctrinal arguments were proposed.

As a result, almost all the early Christian writers whose writings are analysed in this thesis exploited dreams mainly for the articulation or defense of their doctrinal beliefs or positions. Their ardent disposition to promulgate Christian doctrines propelled them to observe and discuss dreams from the doctrinal perspective, or from the perspective which would lead to the illumination of their doctrines. To them, dreams were much more significant in their capacity for reflecting or promoting Christian doctrines than in their meanings for the dreamers. The main reason why

¹⁹ In a broad sense, dreams in Greco-Roman texts were essentially natural, diagnostic, therapeutic, prophetic, mythological or literary. In Jewish Hellenistic writings, they were visionary, impure, revelatory or communicative. In the Scripture, they are futile, deceptive or divinely instrumental. In patristic literature, dreams were essentially apologetic, polemical and doctrinal.

they did not generate any book or treatise dedicated solely to the study of dreams, and why their dream accounts and discussions nearly always appeared in their doctrinal writings, is because their real agenda was concerned with doctrinal rather than oneiric issues. Patristic oneirology was cultivated chiefly in order to attend to early Christian doctrines.

We may discern that dreams and doctrines were methodologically and hermeneutically related to each other in the writings of these Christian writers. In terms of methodology, by doctrinally analysing dreams and their phenomena, these Christian writers were able to practically represent their doctrines. Dreams embodied and popularised doctrinal principles. They rendered abstract doctrines germane to people's common experiences and daily life. Dreams were conducive to the refinement of doctrinal ideas.

In terms of hermeneutics, these Christian writers doctrinally elucidated dreams and their mechanics and defined their ontological meanings. They assigned dreams a theological role and salvific mission in this world. They even interpreted them as evidence of universal truth. Their doctrines extended the realm of dreams from the individual sphere to the communal, from the earth to heaven, from dark night to bright eternity. Their doctrinal teachings orientated people's understanding of dreams towards Christian faith.

4. Towards Understanding Patristic Dreams in Their Doctrinal Context

In other words, when these early Christian writers encountered dreams, they did not simply interpret them. Rather, they also doctrinalised dreams and dream phenomena so as to clarify or undergird their doctrinal convictions, and at the same time, their doctrines were ingeniously integrated into their dream theory. Their

dogmatics dominated their oneirology while the latter disseminated the former.

Dreams and doctrines were interdependent and reciprocal in patristic oneirology.²⁰

By virtue of its doctrinal keynote, patristic oneirology developed a Christian language of dreams, which found no counter part in other ancient oneirologies. Within it, both the demonstration of Christian faith and the defense of Christian doctrines took priority, even though they may undermine its dream theory. It thus marked the genesis of a new ideology of dreams in late antiquity. Accordingly, dreams in patristic texts can be fully comprehended only in the thread of early Christian doctrinal thoughts. Likewise, early Christian doctrines cannot be thoroughly examined without probing into patristic oneirology.

Many scholars (including psychologists)²¹ have been fascinated with the dreams in patristic texts and interpreted them with fervour. The major problem in their interpretations arises mostly from their neglect of the doctrinal context of these dreams. Some of them imposed modern ideas on these dreams while others extracted things which were actually absent in them. In consequence, their interpretations can hardly be in tune with what these dreams originally attempted to present.

5. Patristic Oneirology in the Context of Contemporary Christianity

Everyone dreams. Every day, a considerable number of people talk and think about dreams. Many Christians even spend more time dreaming than in reading the

²⁰ Ephraem Syrus wrote, "The blameless Magi as they slept, meditated on their beds; sleep became a mirror, and a dream rose on it as light." Ephraem Syrus, *De Nativitate*. 14.17.10 (trans. A.E. Johnston, *NPNF* 13.258; French trans. *SC* 459.283 [column 24.10]). To borrow Syrus' idea to describe patristic oneirology, we may say that when some church fathers pondered over dogmatic issues, dreams became a mirror, and doctrines rose on it as light for those issues; often, vice versa (i.e. doctrines could be that mirror, and dreams be light).

²¹ Such as Marie-Louise von Franz, who is a Jungian and is famous for her psychological interpretation of Perpetua's dreams. See her "Die Passio Perpetuae," in *Aion: Untersuchungen zur Symbolgeschichte*.

Bible, and ponder theology less than their dreams. They may long for an answer to some question about dreams, but never to a theological problem. In spite of people's deep concerns about dreams, modern theologians have expressed very little interest in this subject and its related issues.

Dreams had been frequently utilised by the divine to relay messages to humanity in the ancient world. In some periods, they were very likely the most common means by which God communicated with people. However, they have become a forgotten divine language in the modern world. For most contemporary Christians, the occurrence of meeting or conversing with the divine through dreams only exists in biblical narratives, and cannot possibly be experienced by them.

We may query: Do modern Christians more freely dream of God than early Christians? If a dreamer, like Hermas or Perpetua, appears in the midst of our congregation, will we admire them and propagate their dream messages? Freud emerges, in a sense, as a modern Artemidorus, but where is the modern Tertullian, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius Ponticus, Augustine or John Cassian? When we hear someone recalling a dream which bears a close resemblance to the dream of Jerome or Martin of Tours, can we expect it to be recorded by our theologians or preserved by our church authorities?

Above all, the key question is whether or not our contemporary Christianity has its own dream theory or oneirology which conforms to its faith? The reality is that what most Christians nowadays know about dreams, the language they use when talking or thinking about dreams (i.e. dream terminology and notions) and how they interpret their dreams, are actually all derived from psychology, psychoanalysis or the like, rather than from the Christian dream tradition. Modern psychologists have endeavoured to develop a dream theory and language for their believers, whereas

contemporary theologians have not yet done anything fundamental for Christians.

All these questions and facts call for the urgent need for a Christian dream theory and language to be established for contemporary Christians. This is where and why patristic oneirology should be revived. It is true that the dream reports and discourses in patristic texts were generated chiefly for an apologetic purpose and were doctrinal in essence. But this does not mean that patristic oneirology is something of an anachronism in the contemporary world. Rather, it can be can substantially contributive to our oneirological enterprise, just as early Christian doctrines prove to be invaluable to modern theology. For example, patristic views of dreams can be precious theoretical resources which facilitate our construction of a dream theory in accordance with Christian faith and tradition. Patristic dream texts as a whole can be a linguistic depository of bountiful dream terminology and conceptions which enable us to develop a dream language that can be identified as Christian.

Hence, this thesis proposes that oneirology ought to be included in the field of theology, particularly as one branch of patristics. It also calls on contemporary theologians to revive patristic views of dreams and resurrect the early Christian dream tradition. If contemporary Christians acquire knowledge of patristic oneirology, they may understand the function and phenomena of dreams, and also grasp the sacred meanings of their dreams, from a Christian perspective. They may, in dreams, see the movement of their soul, the condition of their body, or the status quo of their morality. When they have nightmares or sexual dreams, they may neither overlook nor overreact to them. They may know how to discern demon-inspired dreams and how to overcome them. They may completely change their attitude towards dreams (either theirs or others') as well as the dream world.

More importantly, they may begin to yearn for dream messages from God. Since God may intervene in their lives and impart crucial messages to them through dreams on any night, they will open themselves every night to the new (im)possibilities of dreams. Everyday before sleep they may want to lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles them and prepare themselves to meet their God. And they may also pray, "Our God in heaven, hallowed be the dreams from you, your dreams come..." They may therefore encounter the divine and receive a life-changing message in dreams. Their lives may then be dramatically altered owing to those encounters and messages.

In the very beginning of his *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, Ernst Bloch asks modern readers five profound questions: Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? What are we waiting for? And what awaits us?²² According to patristic oneirology, our answer to these questions could be: We are God's people who are capable of conversing with the divine or receiving messages from the divine in dreams. We come from this world but we are going to the heavenly world where our Lord has prepared for us a palace and rewards, both of which we may see in our dreams. Therefore, we are now waiting for the coming of the night and for dreaming of the divine.

At the same time, our God is waiting for us. He is waiting for us to understand the nature of dreams from the perspective of Christian faith. He is waiting for us to fall into sleep, in which there is no mundane disturbance, so that He can appear to us in dreams, can console or speak to us, and can lead us to taste the feeling of being in heaven while we are still living in this world.

²² Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1959), 1.

Appendix A

Greco-Roman Views of Dreams

But come, let us ask some seer or priest, or
some readers of dreams— for a dream too is
from Zeus— who might tell us why Phoebus
Apollo has conceived such anger.

— Homer, *Iliad* 1.62-63

There is no divine power which creates
dreams...none of the visions seen in dreams
have their origin in the will of the gods.

— Cicero, *De Divinatione* 2.60.124

He dreamt that he went into the temple of the
god and that god stretched out his right hand
and offered the man his fingers to eat. The
man ate five dates and was cured.

— Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 5.89

When exploring patristic views of the nature of dreams, it is necessary to investigate Greco-Roman, Jewish and biblical dream traditions, which form the context in which patristic oneirology was shaped and developed. This investigation provides critical information for understanding the background of the patristic dream tradition. The Greco-Roman views of dreams should be introduced first, as they predominated over other oneirological views in the ancient world, at least before late antiquity.

Dreams were the blood of Greeks and Romans from which they absorbed nutrition for their souls and moral fiber, and by which they diagnosed their physical state. Through dreams they were not only able to make contact with the deities, but also received divine guidance, messages, predictions and prescriptive advice. In

Greek and Roman literature there is nearly always a dream before the beginning, or near the end, of a noble life, a decisive war, a new kingdom or a great empire.

Dreams ushered the turning points into Greco-Roman history.¹

1. Dreams Typology

It is appropriate to first discuss the dream taxonomy of Greco-Roman writers before investigating their views of dreams because, undoubtedly, this would greatly influence the way in which they pondered on dreams. Various kinds of dream typologies were developed in antiquity.² Most of them fall into two main categories: one according to the content of dreams and the other according to their origin.

a. According to Content

Both Homer and Virgil wrote that dreams (ὄνειρον/*somnium*) emanate from the two gates: one is fashioned of horn (πύλη κέραος/*porta cornea*) and the other of ivory (πύλη ἐλέφαντος/*porta eburnea*). The dreams that pass through the former gate (κέρας) bring things to be fulfilled (κραίνουσι) while those that come forth through the latter one (ἐλέφας) deceive (ἐλεφαίρονται) men.³ Dreams, therefore, can be classified as true or false, or in effect as useful or useless. This twofold typology

¹ For instance, in the work of Herodotus, the Father of History, dreams always emerged and came into play at a critical juncture of ancient history. See *Historiae* 1.34, 36, 38-40, 43, 107-108, 120-121, 209-211; 2.139-141, 151; 3.30, 64-65, 124-125, 149; 5.55-56, 62; 6.107-108, 118; 7.12-19; 8.54 (ed. H. Rosén, Vol. I, 23, 24, 25-6, 27, 72-3, 80-2, 131-3; Vol. I, 226-8, 234-5; Vol. I, 272, 294-6, 331-2, 347; Vol. II, 33-4, 36-7; Vol. II, 138-9, 145; Vol. II, 175-81; Vol. II, 329-30).

² For a thorough discussion of ancient dream typology, see A. H. M. Kessels, "Ancient Systems of Dream-Classification." In *Mnemosyne*. Series 4, 22 (1969), 389-424; and C.A. Behr, *Aelius Aristides*, 171-195.

³ Homer, *Odyssey* 19.562-567 (LCL 105.276). Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.893-896 (LCL 63.596). In addition to these two gates of dreams presented by Homer and Virgil, Lucian proposed third and fourth ones: the gates of iron and earthenware where the fearful and revolting dreams go out. Lucian, *A True Story* 2.32-5 (LCL 14.336-40). Lucian's view on gates of dream, however, achieved less popularity than that of Homer or Virgil among Greeks or Romans. Tertullian also commented on Homer's gates of dreams in his *De Anima* 46.2 (ed. J.H. Waszink, 63). Lactantius mentioned Virgil's dream classification, but he reckoned that false dreams were seen for the sake of sleeping while true dreams were sent by the Christian God. *De Opificio Dei* 18 (CSEL 27.57-9).

focuses on the utility of dreams, rather than their cause.

Influenced by the works of Homer and Virgil, this twofold dream typology was widely adopted in the ancient world. Several philosophers, such as Aristotle and Epicurus, demonstrated the incredibility of dreams, but most ordinary and educated people, Pythagoras and Plato among them, considered the majority of dreams to be true and reliable.⁴

In his dream book *Oneirocritica* written in the second century, Artemidorus, who has helped us to “know the dreams of the early Antonine age better than any before or after in antiquity,”⁵ enunciated another twofold dream taxonomy based on the content of dreams. In his classification, there were primarily two types of dreams: *enypnion* (ἐνύπνιον), which contained simply a reminder of a physical and mental state of dreamers, and *oneiros* (ὄνειρος), which indicated things that would occur in the future. Specifically, the former signified the present state while the latter the future affair. He further divided *oneiros* into two subcategories: theomematical dreams (θεωρηματικοί), those which “come true just as they are seen” and allegorical dreams (ἀλληγορικοί), those which “disclose their meaning through riddles.”⁶

Around the end of the fourth century Neoplatonist Macrobius devised another dream typology similar to that of Artemidorus.⁷ Within Macrobius’ classification there were five types of dreams: the enigmatic dream (*somnium*/ὄνειρος), the

⁴ Aristotle, *De Insomniis* 460a32-b22; 461a8-462a15 (ed. D. Gallop, 94-6; 96-102); *De Divinatione per Somnum* 462b12-29; 463b12-22 (ed. Gallop, 106; 110); Epicurus, *Fragment* 325-8 (ed. H. Usener, *Epicurea* [Lipsiae: Teubner, 1887], 224-5. According to Cicero, Sisenna, influenced by some Epicurean, maintained that dreams (*somniis*) were not worthy of belief. Cicero, *De Divinatione* 1.64.99-100 (*LCL* 154.328-30). In his *De Anima* 46.2 (ed. Waszink, 63), Tertullian scorned Epicurean assertion that “all dreams (*somnia*) are vain and meaningless.” For ancient philosophers’ attitudes towards dreams, see Le Goff, *L’imaginaire Médiéval*, 270-281; R.G.A. van Lieshout, *Greeks on Dreams*, 64-164.

⁵ Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 155.

⁶ Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 1.1; 4.1 (ed. R.A. Pack, 3-4; 241-2).

⁷ Because of the similarity between Artemidorus’ and Macrobius’ typology, Kessels argues that “they both directly or indirectly made use of the same source.” A.H.M. Kessels, “Ancient Systems of Dream-Classification,” 395.

prophetic vision (*visio*/ὄραμα), the oracular dream (*oraculum*/χρηματισμός), the nightmare (*insomnium*/ἐνύπνιον) and the apparition (*visum*/φάντασμα).⁸

Both the fact that almost the whole work of *Oneirocritica* was devoted to the interpretations of *oneiros* and the assertion of Macrobius that “ἐνύπνιον and φάντασμα are not worthy interpreting since they have no prophetic significance”⁹ may represent a keen interest of both dream theorists and Greco-Roman people in the predictive power of dreams.

b. According to Origin

The other dominant dream classification in antiquity was based on the origin of dreams. In Homeric epics, dreams (ὀνείρων) were issued from the gates of dreams, the dead heroes or the gods, particularly Zeus and Athena,¹⁰ while in Herodotus’ *Historiae* they were caused by dreamers themselves (or what dreamers were thinking during the day) or the gods.¹¹

According to Plato, Socrates believed that the provenance of dreams (ἐνυπνίων) included the dreamer’s soul (which could be either a noble-rational soul or a desirous-irrational one), daemons (δαίμων, which were the mediators between the gods and humans, conveying and taking across to the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men as well as to men the commands and replies of the gods)¹² and the gods.¹³

Stoic Posidonius formulated a typology of mantic dreams which was

⁸ Macrobius, *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* 1.3.2 (ed. J. Willis, 8).

⁹ Ibid. 1.3.3 (ed. J. Willis, 8; trans. W.H. Stahl, 88).

¹⁰ Causation by the gates of dreams: *Odyssey* 19.559-580 (LCL 105.274-6); by the dead: *Iliad* 23.65-107 (LCL 171.496-500) and *Odyssey* 4.795 (LCL 104.176); by gods: *Iliad* 1.62-65; 2.1-47 (LCL 170.16; 170.60-4) and *Odyssey* 4.795-841 (LCL 104.176-80).

¹¹ Herodotus, *Historiae* 7.16 (ed. Rosén, Vol. II, 177-8).

¹² For discussion of the role of daemons in dreams in the ancient world, see Oppenheim, *Interpretation*, 191-192.

¹³ Plato, *Apology* 33C (LCL 36.118-20); *Symposium* 203A (LCL 166.178); *Laws* 10.910A (LCL 192.384); *Republic* 9.571B-572B (LCL 276.338).

preserved by his pupil, Cicero. For him, dreams (*somnium*) that prophesy could be derived from the dreamer's soul (which was clairvoyant because of its kinship with the gods), immortal souls (which pervaded the air) or the gods (who conversed with men when they were asleep).¹⁴

For Apuleius, a well-known Platonist whose works Augustine was well acquainted with and whose thoughts can be found in Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*,¹⁵ dreams (*somnium*) could originate with dreamers themselves, the dead, apparitions (*imago*), daemons or the gods.¹⁶ This fivefold dream causation is illustrated in his works, mostly in his famous Latin novel *Metamorphoseon*, which accurately reflects the second-century popular perspective on dreams, as Gollnick has observed.¹⁷

Ancient peoples proposed a diversity of dream typologies. Oberhelman points out that dream "classifications and nomenclature varied from writer to writer and age to age." There wasn't even a consistent terminology used in antiquity for various types of dreams.¹⁸ Likewise, the people viewed dreams from different perspectives and thus provided diverse explanations of the function, value and purpose of dreams. Considering the purpose and focus of this thesis, the following analysis of Greco-Roman views of dreams is grouped according to the nature of dreams, rather than according to the dream typologies mentioned above.

2. Dreams as Indicators of Physical State

¹⁴ Cicero, *De Divinatione*, 1.30.64 (LCL 154.294).

¹⁵ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 8.14, 16, 19, 22, 24; 9.3-4, 6-8, 10-11, 13, 16; 10.27; 12.10; 18.18 (BA 34.278-82, 286-90, 294-98, 306-8, 316-26; BA 34.348-58, 362-70, 374-6, 380-4, 392-6; BA 34.520-4; BA 35.180-2; BA 36.534-42).

¹⁶ Apuleius, *Metamorphoseoni* 1.18; 4.27; 8.8, 12; 9.31; 11.27, 29, 30 (LCL 44.38; 44.232-4; LCL 453.74, 82; 453.184; 453.348, 354, 356); *De Deo Socratis* 6-7 (ed. J. Beaujeu, 26-8).

¹⁷ James Gollnick, *The Religious Dreamworld of Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999), ix and 69-77.

¹⁸ Steven M. Oberhelman, "Galen, On Diagnosis from Dreams." In *JHMAS*, Vol 38, (1983), n.48.

Both Greco-Roman physicians and philosophers noticed the close correlation between dreams and the somatic condition, and thus deemed that dreams could reflect the physical state and disease. They believed that the soul sensed the prevailing condition throughout the body during sleep, and then disclosed pathological and symptomatic information through dream images, which in the eyes of ancient physicians could assist their diagnosis.

Born around the middle of the fifth century B.C., Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine, established the earliest extant rule of diagnosing patients' diseases by their dreams. In his rule, for example, dreams (ἐνυπνίωσις) that repeated one's actions or thoughts in the daytime, representing them as occurring naturally, indicated physical health. But when dreams were contrary to the acts of the day, a disturbance in the body was indicated. Likewise, to see a heavenly body (the sun, moon or stars) or the things on earth clear and bright signified health, while dark and dull images were a sign of illness; a gentle shower, a pure river or beautiful clothes denoted fitness and a downpour of rain, an impure stream or ill-fitting clothes, malady.¹⁹

In the Hippocratic rule, normal dreams indicated a healthy condition while abnormal dreams indicated a sick one. If there was either a contrast between dreams and reality or an unfavorable sign in dreams, this indicated a physical illness caused by an imbalance (some excess or deficiency) of somatic elements, the entrance of something from without, or anxiety.²⁰ According to the indications given by a patient's dreams, the Hippocratic method could advise on proper treatment for the restoration of a patient's internal equilibrium.

¹⁹ Hippocrates, *Regimen* 4.88-93 (LCL 150.422-46). *Regimen* IV, or entitled *On Dreams* (Περὶ ἐνυπνίωσις), is also the earliest existing Greek treatise on the subject.

²⁰ Holowchak has rightly observed Hippocrates' assumption behind the dream diagnosis that "physical symptoms often influence the imagery in dreams" as well as his prominent use of analogy between cosmos and bodily circuits. M. Holowchak, *Ancient Science and Dreams*, 136.

Influenced by the Hippocratic tradition, the first-century Greek physician Rufus of Ephesus attempted to convince other medical doctors not to overlook the importance of dreams in diagnosis. In his *Medical Questions*, he argued, “I have persuaded myself altogether that visions of dreams (ἐνυπνίων), signifying both good and bad for a person, occur in accordance with the humours in the body. There can be no other understanding of these things for one who listened.”²¹

The most eminent successor of Hippocrates, Galen, not only propagated Hippocratic theory, but further developed it by adding another two considerations to its rule of interpreting dreams: the time when the dream occurred and the nourishment that the dreamer had consumed.²² He therefore generated a more intricate method of dream interpretation for diagnosis than the Hippocratic one.

Cicero, while disapproving of the religious or premonitory significance of dreams,²³ recognised their medical function and usefulness. He wrote, “from some kinds of dreams they [physicians] even can gather certain indications as to patient’s health, as whether the internal humours of the body are excessive or deficient.”²⁴ Artemidorus related dreams not only to the bodily condition of the dreamer, but also to the mental one. Feeling joy or grief in dreams, for instance, pertained to the mind,

²¹ Rufus, *Quaestiones Medicinales* 5.33 (ed. by H. Gärtner, 36; trans. M. A. Holowchak, in his *Ancient Science and Dreams*, 146).

²² Galen, *De Dignotione ex Insomniis* (ed. K.G. Kühn, *Opera Omnia Claudii Galeni*, 833-4; trans. S.M. Oberhelman, in the appendix of “Galen, On Diagnosis from Dreams,” 44).

²³ Cicero, like Aristotle, discredited the idea that dreams could predict the future. Although in the closing portion of his *On the Republic* (6.9-26) Cicero recounted a prophetic dream, his purpose was never to testify to the predictive power of dreams. Rather, it, like the purpose of the vision of Er in Plato’s *Republic*, was to use the dream narrative as a literary form (fiction), for philosophical discourse and political intention, to allegorically express his ideas of the cosmos, heavens, immortality of the soul, and the departed soul’s habitation and rewards. Cicero, *Somnium Scipionis* (in *On the Republic* 6.9-26 [LCL 213.260-82]); *De Divinatione* 2.67.139-2.69.142 (LCL 154.524-8); Macrobius, *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* 1.1-2 (ed. Willis, 1-8). For discussion, see William Stahl, *Macrobius: Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1952, reprint, 1990), 9-23; Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 95-99; and N. Berlin, “Dreams in Roman Epic,” 218-220.

²⁴ Cicero, *De Divinatione* 2.69.142 (ed. and trans. LCL 154.528).

due to one's hope or fear.²⁵

In short, dreams were widely regarded by people in the ancient world, including doctors and thinkers, as valid indicators of physical state. The method of diagnosis of one's disease from one's dreams was so prevalent that dreams "became in function an integral part of Graeco-Roman physician's practice," as Oberhelman has remarked.²⁶

3. Dreams as Residual Images of Sensory Impressions

Aristotle was perhaps the first to systematically propose a physiological and naturalistic explanation of dreaming, which may be the root of subsequent movements towards desacralising or demystifying dreams. In his opinion, dreams were nothing but residual images of sensory impressions.

At the end of his treatise *On Dreams* (Περὶ ἐνυπνίων), Aristotle concluded that the dream was "an image [φάντασμα] that arises from the movement of the sense-impressions", when it occurred during sleep.²⁷ He discerned that a dream was the work of neither perception nor reason, but the product of perceptual after-effect. What people saw in sleep was the residual images of the actual sensory impressions which occurred in the waking state, analogous to the subsisting-image that appears in our eyes when we shifted our gaze from sunlight to darkness— the light persisted in our eyes even when the actual light had departed.²⁸ For Aristotle, dreams were "a sort of replay of previous awaking experience, sometimes bizarrely scrambled as a result of physiological disturbance," as David Gallop has elucidated.²⁹

²⁵ Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 1.1 (ed. Pack, 3-4).

²⁶ Oberhelman, "Dreams in Greco-Roman Medicine," in *ANRW*, 37.1 (1993), 156.

²⁷ Aristotle, *De Insomniis* 462a29-31 (ed. and trans. Gallop, 102).

²⁸ Ibid. 459b7-23; 461b21-30 (ed. Gallop, 90; 100).

²⁹ David Gallop, *Aristotle on Sleep and Dreams* (Ontario: Broadview, 1991; Warminster: Aris

The most influential advocate of Aristotle's dream theory in the Greco-Roman era was Cicero, who contended that dreams "are the result of natural causes, and the ever-active mind having seen things when awake, seem to see them again when asleep." For Cicero, evidently "there is no divine power which creates dreams."³⁰ Also building on Aristotle's idea, Lucretius developed further an explanation of dreams as mental images affected by imagination, memory, preoccupation, perceptual experience, or tenacious pursuit of waking life.³¹

The efforts of the physicians and philosophers mentioned above, together with several other ancient writers, successfully made the non-religious view of dreams an alternative perspective to the religious one in their times. For them, dreams should be deemed as mental images naturally derived from sensory impressions, rather than from some source outside the dreamer. Although this view never became dominant in antiquity, it continued to enjoy a considerable and profound influence among the educated, including church fathers, in the Greco-Roman world.

4. Dreams as Moral Reflection

Several ancient philosophers believed that dreams could faithfully reflect the moral fiber of dreamers. Plato maintained that there existed in every one, even the most respectable, a fierce and lawless brood of desires, which was revealed in dreams. When the rational part of the soul slumbered, the beastly and savage part of it within us would sally forth to satisfy our unlawful desires in dreams. Those who were morally and rationally weak would therefore commit crimes or follies in

and Phillips, revised edition, 1996), 22.

³⁰ Cicero, *De Divinatione* 2.60.124; 2.63.129 (ed. and trans. *LCL* 154.510; 154.514-6).

³¹ Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 4.757-826; 4.916-1036 (*LCL* 181.334-40; 181.348-56).

dreams while those who were stronger could allay the inner passionate element or irrational desires by reason, and thus would likely attain truth, instead of lawless visions, in dreams.³²

Ovid provided a vivid example of Plato's moral theory of dreams. In his *Metamorphoses*, Byblis was a girl delirious with unlawful love for her brother, Caunus. In the waking hours she repressed her immoral desire; but it was fully expressed in her dreams in which she always had physical union with her brother, and only through which her yearnings could be satisfied.³³

Interestingly, while Greco-Roman physicians viewed one's dream as a credible indicator of one's physical state, their philosophical counterparts saw the same dream as a faithful signifier of one's moral superiority or turpitude. Both groups extracted significant information from dreams, but meanwhile other thinkers, such as Epicurus, regarded all dreams simply as illusions.³⁴

5. Dreams as a Site of Epiphany

Greco-Roman literature has shown that without mediators (e.g. daemons, angels or aions) people generally had no direct contact with gods. The divinity was invisible and impalpable to humanity. Nonetheless, several exceptional cases emerge, particularly from dream accounts, in which the gods manifested themselves to humans. As Dodds has astutely observed, "Certainly, of all modes of contact with the supernatural, dreaming is, and was in antiquity, the most widely practiced."³⁵

Jupiter presented himself to a plebeian, Titus Latinus, in a dream in which

³² Plato, *Republic* 9.571B-572B (LCL 276.334-8).

³³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 9.454-516 (LCL 43.34-8).

³⁴ Epicurus, *Fragment* 325-8 (ed. Usener, .224-5); also Tertullian *De Anima* 46.2 (ed. Waszink, 63).

³⁵ Eric R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge: University Press, 1965, reprint, 2001), 38.

Jupiter enjoined him to publicly announce a divine message to the senate. However, the plebeian at first dared not do as he was commanded. The same epiphany was then repeated in his dreams for three times. After utterly neglecting Jupiter's command, his son died, and he suddenly became palsied. Having related his dreams to the senate, his health was restored immediately, and he walked home without aid. This dream account was noted not only by Roman historians, but also by the Christian writers Minucius Felix, Lactantius, Arnobius and Augustine.³⁶

Moved by the prayers of Apuleius, the goddess Queen Isis appeared to him in his dream and said to him that she was the Mother of the universe, mightiest of deities, queen of the dead and the immortals, sovereign of all things spiritual, the single manifestation of all gods and goddesses, and the one worshipped by all the world under different forms, with various rites, and by manifold names. After seeing Queen Isis in the dream, Apuleius supplicated the goddess to supply him with a rich abundance of rhetorical skill in order to describe her marvelous countenance seen in the dream which was worthy of adoration even by the gods.³⁷

The best-known person granted the privilege of having direct intercourse and conversation with the gods through dreams was perhaps Aelius Aristides, a second-century Greek orator. The goddess Athena appeared (in the form of Athena sculpted

³⁶ Plutarch, *Coriolanus* 24 (LCL 80.174-8); Cicero, *De Divinatione* 1.26.55 (LCL 154.282-4); Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium* 1.7.4 (LCL 492.84); Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 2.36 (LCL 114.336-8); Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 7.1-3; 27.1-6 (ed. B. Kytzler, 5-6; 26); Lactantius, *Divinarum Institutionum* 2.7.20 (in Lactantius' text, the plebeian's name is Tiberius Atinius. SC 337.136); Arnobius, *Adversus Nationes* 7.39 (CSLP 62.392-3); Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 4.26 (BA 33.608-12). Both Augustine and Tertullian also mentioned another Roman account of epiphany in dreams. A sacristan of the temple of Hercules offered the god the well-known prostitute Larentina. She fell asleep in the temple. In her dream Hercules had intercourse with her, and said to her that she would find her payment with the youth whom she should first meet on leaving the temple. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 6.7 (BA 34.76-84); Tertullian, *Ad Nationes* 2.10 (CCL 1.57-8). In other texts, Hercules' intercourse with Larentina happened in the night, not specifically in her dream. See Plutarch, *Romulus* 5 (LCL 46.100-2); *Roman Questions* 4-5 (LCL 305.10-4); Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.10 (LCL 510.100-110).

³⁷ Apuleius, *Metamorphoseon* 11.3-6 (LCL 453.294-304). Other appearances of dream epiphany, see 11.26, 29, 30 (LCL 453.348, 354, 356).

by Phidias in Athens) to Aristides in a dream, standing before him, breathing a scent from her aegis, speaking and consoling him, while he was on his sick bed and nothing was wanting for his death.³⁸ Aristides also described the appearances of both Sarapis and Asclepius in his dreams as “marvelous in their beauty and magnitude” and that of Hermes as “marvelously handsome and extraordinarily mobile.”³⁹ In dreams he not only almost touched Asclepius, but conversed with and persuaded Asclepius to assent to his entreaty.⁴⁰

Iamblichus, adopting the view of his teacher Plotinus, also regarded dreams as a way for humanity to contact divinity.⁴¹ Furthermore, if to see a deity’s statues, according to Artemidorus, was the same as seeing that deity,⁴² then in this broad sense, numerous dreamers in Artemidorus’ *Oneirocritica*, who had seen gods’ statues, also witnessed the manifestation of their gods in dreams.

Greco-Roman literature collected numerous accounts of dream epiphany. People in the ancient world believed that they would have more opportunity to see the appearances of their gods in dreams than in other place, as dreams were regarded by them as a common, mediatorial place between human and divine realms, where the transcendent deities could be seen by humanity.

6. Dreams as Messages

In Greco-Roman literature, dreams were one of the ways by which people received significant messages from the divine, the deceased or some unknown source.

³⁸ Aristides, *Oratio* 48.41-42 (trans. C.A. Behr, 299). Another manifestation of Athena noted in *Oratio* 51.25 (trans. Behr, 344).

³⁹ Ibid. 49.46; 50.40 (trans. Behr, 316; 326). Oppenheim remarks that the Greeks desired to describe the divine appearance in dreams “in such details as to give the impression that the appearing deity ‘actually’ entered and left the room of the sleeper.” Oppenheim, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 188.

⁴⁰ Aristides, *Oratio* 47.71; 48.32; 50.50 (trans. Behr, 290; 298; 328).

⁴¹ Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, 3.2-6 (ed. E. C. Clarke, 120-32).

⁴² Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 2.35; 3.39 (ed. Pack, 159-60; 174-6).

The dream messages always emerged at the crucial moment of an individual life, an historical event or a great kingdom.

a. Dream Messages from Gods

Although several philosophers, such as Aristotle and Cicero,⁴³ stood for the impossibility of receiving divine messages through dreams, the majority of Greco-Roman people regarded dreams as the common medium by which divinity spoke or sent messages to humanity.

Homer's epic holds a strong belief that deities send their messages by dreams to humans. The dream messages were generally spoken by figures in human form to sleeping persons. The first chapter of the *Iliad*, for instance, narrates that after the army of Achaeans had suffered a bitter attack for nine days, Achilles spoke to Agamemnon and the army, "let us ask some seer or priests, or some reader or some reader of dreams—for a dream too is from Zeus—who might tell us why Phoebus Apollo has conceived such anger". Moreover, in the next chapter it is revealed that a baneful dream sent by Destructive Dream under the order of Zeus to Agamemnon leads to a renewal of the war between the Greeks and Trojans.⁴⁴

In the *Odyssey*, the goddess Athene delivers a message to the slumbering Penelope through a dream phantom (εἰδωλον) in order to bid her cease from tearful lamentation and alleviate her distress by divine words. As Penelope wakes from sleep, her heart is warmed with comfort because of the dream message.⁴⁵

Xenophon ended the story, *The Cavalry Commander*, with the statement:

"Therefore there is none other that can give counsel in such a case but the gods. They

⁴³ Aristotle, *De Divinatione per Somnum* 462b21-23; 463b12-19 (ed. Gallop, 106; 110). Cicero, *De Divinatione* 2.60.124 (LCL 154.510).

⁴⁴ Homer, *Iliad* 1.62-65; 2.1-47 (ed. And trans. LCL 170.16; 170.60; quotation from 1.62-4). Also interpreted by the church Father Tatian in his *Oratio Adversus Graecos* 22 (ed. M. Whittaker, 44).

⁴⁵ Homer, *Odyssey* 4.788-841 (LCL 104.176-80).

know all things, and warn whomsoever they will in sacrifices, in omens, in voices and in dreams (ὀνειράσιν).”⁴⁶ Socrates also proclaimed that God had sent commands to him by oracles and dreams (ἐνυπνίω).⁴⁷

According to Athenaeus, as Lais of Hyccara was brought as a captive of war to Corinth, Venus of Corinth, the Greek goddess of love, intimated to her in a dream that she would be courted by many lovers of great wealth.⁴⁸ The goddess Juno, in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, sends messages by a dream through Allecto, the Fury of war and death, to Turnus, the King of the Rutuli, at the moment of the arrival of Aeneas and Trojans in Latium. This dream incites Turnus to wage a war against Aeneas. The fierce battle between Latins and Trojans then commences.⁴⁹

In Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, the king Ceyx dies at sea while his wife Alcyone, in ignorance of her husband’s disaster, continues to pray at the goddess Juno’s shrine for the safe return of the king. Juno, no longer enduring the entreaties for the dead, asks the god Somnus (Sleep) to send a dream message to Alcyone which conveys the truth about her dead husband.⁵⁰

During the siege of the Capitol by the Gauls, the Romans were admonished and directed in a dream by Jupiter, the tutelary god of the Capitol, to make all the corn which they had into bread, and throw it into the enemy’s camp. The Gauls being hereby deceived, and despairing of ever reducing the Romans by famine, raised the siege. In gratitude the Romans erected an altar to Jupiter Pistor (the Baker).⁵¹

⁴⁶ Xenophon, *On the Cavalry Commander* 9.9 (LCL 183.292).

⁴⁷ Plato, *Apology* 33C (LCL 36.118-20).

⁴⁸ Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 13.588C (LCL 327.398).

⁴⁹ Virgil, *Aeneid* 7.406-474 (LCL 64.30-4).

⁵⁰ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 11.573-709 (LCL 43.160-70).

⁵¹ Ovid, *Fasti* 6.349-394 (ed. R. Schilling, 84-6); Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 5.48 (LCL 172.160-4). Cf. Lactantius, *Epitome Divinarum Institutionum* 20 (SC 335.84-6) and *Divinarum Institutionum* 1.20.33 (SC 326.204). See N. Hooke, *The Roman History: From the Building of Rome to the Ruin of the Commonwealth*, Vol.2 (London: printed for C.J.G. and F. Rivington, 1830), 112, note 1.

b. Dream Messages from the Dead

In the *Iliad*, the ghost of Patroclus appears in Achilles' dream, complaining that his corpse had not yet received burial. Patroclus' funeral was then arranged.⁵² According to Herodotus, Nasamonians believed that their ancestors would give them essential messages regarding things that would happen through dreams. Hence, their divinatory practice was to go to the sepulchral mounds of their ancestors and sleep there; after having prayed, whatever they saw in dreams was taken to be a message from their ancestors and to be prophetic.⁵³

The dead were even capable of sending messages by dreams to the gods. *Eumenides*, the work of Greek playwright Aeschylus, describes that the ghost of Clytaemestra invokes the Furies, the goddesses of the underworld, in a dream, and tells them that she is dishonoured among the other dead. She appeals in the dream for divine help, and incites the gods to avenge her death.⁵⁴

The second book of Virgil's *Aeneid* recounts a dream that Aeneas has during the fatal night of the fall of Troy. In this dream the dead Trojan prince, Hector, tells Aeneas that the foes have held the walls, and then urges him to flee, taking sacred relics and the household gods of the city to the place beyond the sea where he will at last establish a new city.⁵⁵ After waking up, Aeneas sees the scene of the invasion of the Greeks, exactly like Hector described in the dream, and thus follows his command in the dream— leading survived Trojans to Italy. Kragelund has convincingly argued that this dream should be regarded “as the solemn inauguration

⁵² Homer, *Iliad* 23.62-160 (LCL 171.496-504); also described by Tertullian in *De Anima* 56.2 (ed. Waszink, 74). Kessels sees this account as evidence of an ancient belief that the dead whose bodies remained unburied haunted the living by appearing in dreams. A.H.M. Kessels, *Studies on the Dream in Greek Literature*, 53.

⁵³ Herodotus, *Historiae* 4.172 (ed. Rosén, Vol. II, 442-3). Also mentioned in Tertullian, *De Anima* 57.10 (ed. Waszink, 78).

⁵⁴ Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 94-139 (LCL 146.280-284).

⁵⁵ Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.268-297 (LCL 63.334-6).

of the whole epos: here for the first time he [Aeneas] is told what is his mission.”⁵⁶

In other words, Rome may trace its foundation back to a dream message sent by the deceased with which the adventure of Aeneas beings.

In Apuleius’ *Metamorphoseon*, there is a story in which a dead man appears to his wife in her dream, and tells her that he was killed not in a hunting accident, but by his friend who desired to marry her. The criminal cannot be caught, and vengeance be taken, until this dream message sent by the dead is revealed.⁵⁷

c. Dream Messages from an Unknown Source

According to Plato, a recurring dream whose origin remained unknown had exhorted and encouraged Socrates to study philosophy. Socrates said, “The dream was bidding me do what I was already doing, in the same way that the competitor in a race is bidden by the spectators to run when he is already running.” He therefore had to obey the dream exhortation in order to purge away a scruple which came from the dream.⁵⁸

Greek and Roman texts are rife with message dreams sent by the gods, the dead and someone or something unknown. These dream messages were essential to individuals or communities. They always had the power to seal the fate of a person or to alter the history of an empire.

7. Dreams as Prophecy

Some ancient philosophers argued that predictions in dreams were ruled

⁵⁶ Patrick Kragelund, *Dream and Prediction in the Aeneid* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 1976), 11.

⁵⁷ Apuleius, *Metamorphoseon* 8.1-14 (*LCL* 453.58-84). Also see 9.16-31 (*LCL* 453.154-184) for another similar account in which the dead delivers an important message in his daughter’s dream for the disclosure of a crime of adultery and of sorcery.

⁵⁸ Plato, *Phaedo* 61A (*LCL* 36.210; trans. B. Jowett, 199).

merely by coincidence.⁵⁹ To most Greeks and Romans, however, dreams could really foretell the future, particularly a catastrophic event, a propitious turn, or the rise of a great personage or kingdom.

Plato remarked that the soul which resides about the liver was able to produce divination. Yet “no man attains prophetic truth and inspiration when in his rational mind, but only when the power of his intelligence is fettered in sleep....”⁶⁰ That is, the soul could give inspired divination only in sleep by dreams. Similarly to Plato, Artemidorus maintained that the prophetic dream was “a movement of the soul that takes many shapes and signifies things” which will occur in the future.⁶¹

The prominent physician and philosopher Galen, like his teacher Hippocrates, while viewing dreams primarily as signifiers of physical state, also acknowledged the prophetic aspect of dreams. He noted “the conditions of the body do not account for all of the soul’s dream images in sleep...It has been our experience that certain matters are prophetically foreshadowed by the soul...[some] dreams are also prophetic messages.”⁶²

For Apuleius, it was through daemons, who caused ominous fissures in entrails, governed the flight of birds, inspired prophets and framed dreams, that humans obtained knowledge of future events.⁶³ According to Calcidius, the Stoic Heraclitus thought that by virtue of the inseparable connection of human reason with the divine reason which governs the universe, the human soul during the rest of the

⁵⁹ Aristotle, for instance, recognised the occurrence of prophetic dreams. Yet he deduced that they should be classed as mere coincidences. *De Divinatione per Somnum* 463a32-b11 (ed. Gallop, 108-10). Another example see Cicero, *De Divinatione* 2.67.139-2.69.142 (LCL 154.524-8).

⁶⁰ Plato, *Timaeus* 71D-E (LCL 234.186).

⁶¹ *Oneirocritica* 1.2 (ed. Pack, 5; trans. R.J. White, 24).

⁶² Galen, *De Dignotione ex Insomniis* (ed. Kühn, *Opera Omnia Claudii Galeni*, 833; trans. Oberhelman, 44).; Hippocrates, *Regimen* 4.87 (LCL 150.422).

⁶³ Apuleius, *De Deo Socratis* 6-7 (ed. J. Beaujeu, 26-8); Also noted in Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 8.16 (BA 34.286-90). For typical examples of prophetic dreams in Apuleius’ work, see his *Metamorphoseon* 11.20, 26-27 (LCL 453.330, 346-50).

senses, namely in dreams, was able to foretell the future.⁶⁴

Regardless of whether the predictive power of dreams originated from daemons, the human soul or the divine help, Greco-Roman writers had yielded a considerable volume of prophetic dream accounts. While some dreams showed clearly what would happen, others gave only vaguely premonitory signs which needed to be interpreted by the art of dream divination.⁶⁵ Homer, for example, described that Odysseus's wife Penelope had a dream prophesying that her husband, whom she thought had died at Ilium the Evil, would come back safely and kill her suitors.⁶⁶

In his *Historiae*, Herodotus recorded more than two dozen mantic dreams,⁶⁷ one of which was the dream of Astyages, King of the Medes. Astyages saw in a dream that the water urinated by his daughter inundated his city as well as all Asia, and in another instance that a vine from the womb grew and overspread the whole of Asia. The Magian dream-interpreters signified to Astyages that the offspring of his daughter would be king in his empire. His daughter's son, Cyrus, fulfilled the prophecy of the dream and attested to the correct interpretation of the Magian.⁶⁸

The Greek historian Philistus wrote a story in which the mother Dionysius dreamed that she had delivered an infant Satyr. When she refereed this dream to the interpreters of portents, they replied that she would bring forth a son who would be

⁶⁴ Calcidius, *Commentarius in Platonis Timaeum* 251 (ed. J.H. Waszink, 260-1); Heraclitus, *Fragments*, in *Presocratics*, ed. and trans. by Philip Wheelwright (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1966, reprint, 1997), 72-75.

⁶⁵ According to both Clement of Alexandria and Tatian, divination by dreams was first invented by the barbarian Telmesians, not by Greeks or Romans. Clement, *Stromata* 1.16 (SC 30.104); Tatian, *Oratio Adversus Graecos* 1 (ed. M. Whittaker, 2-4).

⁶⁶ Homer, *Odyssey* 19.539-599 (LCL 105.274-8).

⁶⁷ Herodotus, *Historiae* 1.34, 36, 38-40, 43, 107-108, 120-121, 209-201; 2.139-141, 151; 3.30, 64-65, 124-125, 149; 5.55-56, 62; 6.107-108, 118; 7.12-19; 8.54. (ed. Rosén, Vol. I, 23, 24, 25-6, 27, 72-3, 80-2, 131-3; Vol. I, 226-8, 234-5; Vol. I, 272, 294-6, 331-2, 347; Vol. II, 33-4, 36-7; Vol. II, 138-9, 145; Vol. II, 175-81; Vol. II, 329-30).

⁶⁸ Ibid. 1.107-109 (ed. Rosén, Vol. I, 72-3); also in Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium* 1.7.ext.5 (LCL 492.94-6); and Tertullian, *De Anima* 46.4 (ed. Waszink, 63).

the most illustrious man in Greece, with long lasting good fortune.⁶⁹

Before he met the boy Plato, Socrates had foreseen his prosperity through a dream in which Plato appeared as a young swan flying from the sacred altar of Cupid in the Academy to the heavens, alluring the ears of both men and gods with its harmonious voice. The popularity of this premonitory dream was testified to by the fact that it was mentioned by several writers in late antiquity, including Apuleius, Origen and Tertullian.⁷⁰ In addition, three days before his death, Socrates had a dream predicting the exact date of his execution which he had never known.⁷¹

Julius Caesar, in obedience to a portentous dream of his physician Artorius, escaped from a great danger, according to both Valerius Maximus and Cassius Dio.⁷² Moreover, the assassination of Caesar was also foretold by a dream of his wife's.⁷³

Plutarch reported that while Cicero was still a child, his nurse's dream predicted his eminence, which would be a great blessing to all the Romans.⁷⁴ The same source also narrated that Cicero had a dream in which Gaius Octavius, who was yet only a young boy and unknown to Cicero himself at that time, was appointed by the god Jupiter as the future ruler of Rome and the suppressor of civil discords.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ This story was preserved in Cicero's *De Divinatione* 1.20.39 (LCL 154.268-70); also in Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium* 1.7.ext.7 (LCL 492.96). Tertullian gave the same story, but his source was Heraclides, not Philistus. *De Anima* 46.6 (ed. Waszink, 63).

⁷⁰ Apuleius, *De Platone et Eius Dogmate* 1.1 (ed. J. Beaujeu, 60-1); Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.8 (SC 147.194-8); Tertullian, *De Anima* 46.9 (ed. Waszink, 64); Also in Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1.30.3 (LCL 188.166) and Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 3.7 (LCL 184.282); Athenaeus provided another version of this dream. *Deipnosophistae* 11.507 (LCL 274.478-82).

⁷¹ Plato, *Crito* 43C-44B (LCL 36.152-4).

⁷² Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium* 1.7.1-2 (LCL 492.80-2); Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 47.41 (LCL 82.200-2); and Plutarch, *Antony* 22 (ed. K. Ziegler, 80-1); Also noted by Tertullian in *De Anima* 46.8 (ed. Waszink, 64) and by Lactantius in *Divinarum Institutionum* 2.7.22-3 (SC 337.102-4).

⁷³ Plutarch, *Caesar* 63.5 (LCL 99.590).

⁷⁴ Plutarch, *Cicero* 2 (LCL 99.84-6); Tertullian, *De Anima* 46.9 (ed. Waszink, 64).

⁷⁵ Plutarch, *Cicero* 44 (LCL 99.194-6); Dio provided a different version of the dream account in his *Roman History* 45.1-2 (LCL 66.406-12); Tertullian wrote in *De Anima* 46.7 (ed. Waszink, 63-4) that this dream account was recorded in the commentaries of Vitellius.

Greco-Roman literature has documented the prognostic capability of dreams, an oneiric power which few people in antiquity denied. It has therefore preserved a large number of the reports of mantic dreams, many of which are also cited in patristic writings.⁷⁶ Tertullian, quoting several reports as evidence in order to shame Epicurus who repudiated prediction by means of dreams, even proclaimed that the whole of world literature testified to prophetic dreams.⁷⁷

8. Dreams as Divine Remedy

Ancient Greeks and Romans shared a belief in the therapeutic value of dreams. The gods, Asclepius (the god of medicine and healing) being the most famous, could provide healing or give a prescription through dreams. People also practiced incubation, that is, to sleep in a sacred place overnight, usually in a temple or shrine, in order to appeal to the gods for divine remedy by means of dreams.

In the play *Plutus* by Aristophanes, when Blepsidemus wants to call a doctor for a blind man, Chremylus tells Blepsidemus: “I reckon that we should let him lie inside the temple of Asclepius and put him in a bed there. I think that this is our best option.”⁷⁸ According to the second-century geographer Pausanias, Corinthians located the statue of *Oneiros* (Ὀνείρου, the god of Dream) in the temple of, and worshiped him there together with, Asclepius;⁷⁹ this is because Asclepius often provided the divine cure and treatment through dreams. In his *Meditations*, Marcus Aurelius wrote that “I thank gods for...that remedies have been shown to me by

⁷⁶ For examples: Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.21 (SC 30.126-51); Tertullian, *De Anima* 46.4-12 (ed. Waszink, 63-5); Lactantius in *Divinarum Institutionum* 2.7 (SC 337.94-104).

⁷⁷ Tertullian, *De Anima*, 46.10 (ed. Waszink, 64). Epicurus, *Fragment* 325-8 (ed. Usener, 224-5).

⁷⁸ Aristophanes, *Plutus* 400-421 (LCL 180.482-6).

⁷⁹ Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 2.10.2 (LCL 188.298).

dreams against blood-spitting and giddiness.”⁸⁰

The Greek orator Aristides recorded a sequence of his dreams sent from Asclepius, most of which provided curative prescriptions, as well as many cases of recovery of illnesses through the practice of incubation.⁸¹ He wrote, for example, that several dreams were revealed to him when his doctor had arrived and had prepared himself to aid according to his own lights. Yet when the doctor heard the dreams, being a wise man, “he yielded the god; and we recognised the true and proper doctor for us, and we did what he [the god] commanded.”⁸²

Iamblichus asserted, “In Asclepius sanctuaries, diseases are healed by the divine dreams, and because of the ordinance of nocturnal apparitions, the medical art has arisen from divinely-inspired dreams.”⁸³ Artemidorus reported that a man with a stomach disorder implored Asclepius for a medical prescription. The man then dreamed that “the god stretched out his right hand and offered the man his fingers to eat. The man ate five dates and was cured.” Moreover, a man with an abscess in his belly was healed after undergoing surgery performed by Asclepius in a dream.⁸⁴

The divine healing by means of dreams was renowned by ancient people as a distinguished form of medical treatment and was acknowledged by their physicians as well. Manifold testimonies of restorations of health resulting from the dream remedy or incubation were carefully preserved in Greco-Roman literature.⁸⁵

Conclusion

⁸⁰ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 1.17.8 (LCL 58.24).

⁸¹ Aristides, *Oratio* 47-48 (trans. Behr, 278-307).

⁸² Ibid. 47.57 (trans. Behr, 287).

⁸³ Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, 3.3 (ed. E. C. Clarke, 124-8).

⁸⁴ The dates of the palm tree were also called “fingers.” Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 5.89 (ed. Pack, 323; trans. White, 250); also see 5.61 (ed. Pack, 315).

⁸⁵ For the collection of the testimonies, see E. J. Edelstein and L. Edelstein, *Asclepius* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1945, reprint, 1998), 209-261, 414-442.

Ancient Greeks and Romans dwelled in the world of “reality” as well as the dream world. To the majority of them, what they saw in the latter world was never less valuable, meaningful or substantial than that seen in the former. Dreams preoccupied their minds. In this social setting, it is unsurprising that Greek and Roman writers endeavoured to formulate diverse dream typologies and theories, wrote numerous dream books and recorded myriad dream accounts.

In the Greco-Roman world, some philosophers enunciated that dreams could reflect the physical state of the dreamer or their moral fiber, while others believed that they were an elaborate amalgam of mental images naturally emanating from sensory impressions. For most writers, dreams could relay extraordinary knowledge to dreamers, disclose vital information, foretell future events or prescribe remedies for their malady. Dreams even became a sacred site for contact between divinity and humanity. Moreover, in Greco-Roman literature we also easily find dreams occurring at the critical moment of individual lives of the nobility, and also at the inauguration of crucial events that marked major turning points of their epic history.

Greco-Roman dream texts therefore present various views of dreams in which the nature of dreams can be regarded as indicators of the physical state, as residual images of sensory impressions, as moral reflections, as a site of epiphany, as essential messages, as prophecy or as divine remedy. In general, Greek and Roman people highly appreciated the significance of dreams, much more so than their contemporary Jewish or Christian counterparts.

Appendix B

Jewish Views of Dreams

We told him in a dream that it was forgiven
him because he supplicated earnestly...
— *Jubilees* 41:24

The spirit of God came upon Miriam one
night, and she saw a dream and told it to her
parents in the morning,...her parents did not
believe her. — *Pseudo-Philo* 9:10

Matthias the high priest...in a dream to have
intercourse with his wife; and because he
could not officiate himself on that account,
Joseph...assisted him in that sacred office.
— *Jewish Antiquities* 17.166

This section explores Jewish views of the nature of dreams for the purpose of providing necessary information in order to comprehend the context in which the patristic dream tradition was established. Jewish dream texts in Hellenistic Judaism from the Persian period to the Roman Empire around the second century A.D. will be examined, with the focus mainly on those in Pseudepigrapha and the works of Josephus and Philo. The dream texts in the Scripture will be excluded, as they will be discussed in the following section, Biblical Views of Dreams.¹

¹ The dream texts which can reflect Jewish views of dreams include those in the canonical Jewish books (the Hebrew Bible and the deuterocanonical books) as well as those in the non-canonical Jewish writings. However, church fathers regarded the latter as much less authoritative and less significant than the former. In addition, they treated the oneirological ideas in the former mainly as biblical views of dreams, instead of Jewish ones. Considering these two reasons, and also to avoid repetition, this thesis will examine the dream texts in the canonical Jewish books in the following section (i.e. Biblical Views of Dreams), rather than in this one. Accordingly, this section presents only the Jewish views of dreams found in the non-canonical Jewish dreams texts, mostly those in the Hellenistic and Roman eras, which were better known to church fathers. Furthermore, and

Church fathers rarely referred to non-canonical Hellenistic Jewish texts (hereafter, the Hellenistic Jewish texts) or Jewish oneirological views when they discoursed on dreams. This may indicate that Jewish views of dreams had less influence over the early Christian dream tradition than biblical or Greco-Roman views. Accordingly, although Jewish literature of the Hellenistic and Roman era comprises almost three times the volume of dream accounts present in the Bible,² this thesis, considering its focus, will only give a general, rather than detailed, analyses of Jewish views of the nature of dreams.

Dream accounts in Hellenistic Jewish literature functioned primarily for the expression of religious belief, theological agenda or political propaganda. Even sexual dreams were entirely germane to religious affairs within the context of Judaism. Moreover, dreams could serve as a sacred venue for the divine manifestation, as a vehicle for transmitting divine messages and prophecies, as a medium of divine revelation or as reinforcement to fortify the faith of the Israelites. Furthermore, in dreams, several noble figures of Israel's sacred history experienced other worldly journeys. In dreams, some of them were even ontologically transformed into angels or creatures other than human beings.

1. Dream Typology

The dream classification of Hellenistic Jewish writers ought to be discussed first before probing into their views of dreams, as this would have deeply affected the

for the same reasons, special attention will be paid to the Jewish dreams which have no biblical parallel. For example, although both Jacob's dream at Bethel (*Ant.* 1.279-284) and Amram's dream (*Ant.* 2.212-217) are recorded in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*, this section will treat the former with less importance than the latter, which is not found in the Bible. For the full list of the Jewish dream texts examined in this thesis, see the Source section in the Introduction Chapter.

² There are over one hundred dream narratives (episodes) in the Hellenistic Jewish dream texts, while the Bible (including the deuterocanonical books) contains only about thirty-five.

way they, and their contemporaries, thought of dreams. Unfortunately, there is perhaps only one dream typology that appeared in the extant early Jewish texts. It was formulated by the Jewish philosopher Philo.³

In his *Περὶ τοῦ θεοπέμπτους εἶναι τοὺς ὀνείρους* (*De Som.*)⁴ Philo distinguished between three kinds of “heaven-sent dreams.” The first class of divinely-inspired dreams were the dreams which the divine directly sent to people in sleep, and in which “God originates the movement” and revealed obscure things to them (1.1, 2.2). This implies, according to Whitaker, that “the dreamer’s own thoughts had no part” in this type of dreams.⁵ The initiative entirely belonged to the divine. Nevertheless, the intimations given by God through the dreams were always plain and clear to the dreamer (2.3). Both Schürer and Oepke suggest that Abimelech’s dream (Gen 20:3) can be categorised into this class.⁶

The second class of divinely-inspired dreams were those in which the dreamer’s mind, “moving out of itself together with the Mind [or the soul]”⁷ of Universe, seems to be possessed and God-inspired, and so capable of receiving some

³ Many scholars believe that Philo adopted Stoic Posidonius’ dream typology (which was recorded by Cicero in his *De Divinatione* 1.30.64 [LCL 154.294]) with some adaptations. Behr, *Aelius Aristides*, 176; G. H. Whitaker, *On Dreams*, LCL 275 (1934, reprint, 2001), 593; Robert Berchman, “Arcana Mundi,” in *SBLSP* 26 (1987): 403-428; Waszink, “Die Sogenannte Fünfteilung der Träume,” in *Mnemosyne* III.9 (1940): 77-78. Kessels, “Ancient Systems of Dream-Classification,” 396-414. For the opposite opinion, see H.A. Wolfson, *Philo*. Vol. II (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), 55-72.

⁴ According to Eusebius’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.18 (SC 31.78) and Jerome’s *De Viris Illustribus* 11 (PL 23. 625-9), Philo wrote five tractates on dreams. However, only two have survived. Origen, in his *Contra Celsum* 6.21 (SC 147.222), admires Philo’s discourse on the ladder in Jacob’s dream which appears in the first extant book (*De Som.* 1.2-132). The current title *De Somniis* of the two extant works is not Philo’s own, according to Oepke, who comments that at root Philo’s one exclusive concern regarding dreams “is his own philosophical thinking.” Oepke, “ὄναρ,” in *TDNT*. Vol. V, (1967) 231-232. On the other hand, some scholars argue that Philo’s *De Somniis* may have nothing to do with philosophy, but with politics. For instance, Hay asserts that *De Somniis* is mainly to “present answers to some of the practical political problems.” David Hay, “Politics and Exegesis in Philo’s Treatise on Dreams,” in *SBLSP* 26 (1987): 438.

⁵ Whitaker, *On Dreams*, 285.

⁶ Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*. Vol.3, Part II. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985), 840; Oepke, “ὄναρ,” 231.

⁷ Cf. *De Som.* 2.2

foretaste and foreknowledge of things to come (1.2).” That is, if the dreamer’s mind was somehow united with the universal soul and also inspired by God, it could then foresee the future. The initiative still belonged to someone other than the dreamer. The messages in this kind of dream were enigmatic, but their riddles were “not in very high degree concealed from the quick-sighted (2.3).” Philo provided two examples of this class of dream, with elaborate exegeses of each one (1.2-256): Jacob’s dream at Bethel (Gen 28:12-15) and his dream of the flock whose markings varied (Gen 31:11-13).

The final class were those dreams which arose “whenever the soul in sleep, setting itself in motion and agitation of its own accord, becomes frenzied, and with the prescient power due to such inspiration foretells the future (2.1).”⁸ Although the dreams in this class were still categorised as divinely-inspired, it was the dreamers who exercised their own right. This kind of dream also manifested the power of divination of the dreamer’s soul. Their dream messages, however, were more obscure and vague than those in the former two classes, and could be correctly unraveled only by those who had special authority and skill— both bestowed by the divine— in interpreting this type of dreams (2.4). For Philo, those skillful dream interpreters equated to “prophets expounding divine oracles” (*De Jos.* 95). Philo considered three pairs of dreams as typical examples of this class: the two dreams of Joseph (Gen 37), the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker (Gen 40) and the two of the Pharaoh (Gen 41).

Except Philo, there was probably no other early Jewish writer who explicitly proposed a dream typology. Philo’s dream typology presented in his extant works may be the only one in Hellenistic Judaism which has survived, and therefore has

⁸ Cf. *Migr. Abr.* 190.

been invaluable to us in understanding the dream taxonomy in the early Jewish community, despite the fact that it deals only with divinely-inspired dreams, to the exclusion of other types of dreams. Owing to the aim and focus of this thesis, the following discussion of Hellenistic Jewish views of dreams is arranged according to the nature of dreams, rather than Philo's dream classification.

2. Dreams as Impurity

In some Hellenistic Jewish texts, sexual dreams were essentially regarded as impure. They made dreamers unclean according to Jewish ritual law. If a priest had sexual intercourse in his dream, he was unable to officiate in his priestly duty.

According to *Jewish Antiquities*, it happened that during the time of the high priesthood of Matthias, there was a person made high priest for a single day.

On the night before the very day when the fast was to be observed by the Jews, Matthias had intercourse with his wife in a dream (ὄνειρος)⁹. This dream rendered him “ritually impure to perform his priestly services.”¹⁰ His kinsman Joseph, therefore, served as a high priest on that day (*Ant.* 17.165-167).

Moreover, Matthias would need to be purified by a ritual of cleanness from the impurity brought about by the dream according to the Talmudic law (Lev 15:16).¹¹ In the Levitical system, one who had a seminal emission or sexual intercourse, including that which occurred in dreams, would be ritually unclean and thus could not participate in the Temple-based activity. “Such rules were especially

⁹ In extant non-canonical Hellenistic Jewish texts, the most frequent terms for dream are: חלום (in Hebrew), ὄναρ and ὄνειρος (in Greek), ܠܝܡܐ (in Syriac), በሕልም (in Ethiopic) and *somnium* (in Latin). See Appendix A for the table of the terms used for dreams in the texts. For a thorough discussion of the typical vocabulary of dreams in Hellenistic Jewish literature, see, Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers*, 129-136; and Gnuse, *Dream Reports*, 15-20, 202-203.

¹⁰ Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers*, 121.

¹¹ For discussion of impurity brought by dreams in Jewish law see Gnuse, *Dream Reports*, 192; Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (NY: Oxford University, 2004), 242.

stringent for priests,” as Barbara Geller has noticed.¹²

There is perhaps only one account in the entire Hellenistic Jewish literature which explicitly refers to sexual dreams, and that is the high priest Matthias’ dream recorded by Josephus. However, this sole dream account, because of its view in conformity with the Jewish Levitical system, is enough to testify to the early Jewish view of dreams as impurity.

3. Dreams as a Site of Epiphany

The Jewish Torahic tradition declared an impossibility that a human being could see God’s face and still live (Ex 33:20). Nonetheless, dreams created a way where there appeared to be none. Hellenistic Jewish authors reported several accounts whereby in dreams people, particularly pseudepigraphic great figures, were able to see the appearance of God without dying.

I Enoch depicts that in his dream Enoch was summoned to enter the presence of the Excellent and Glorious One, where “none of the angels was able to come in.” There he saw the divine face which neither angels nor humans can behold (*I En.* 14:8-25).¹³

According to *Pseudo-Philo*, when Joshua came close to death, he intended to establish a (renewal) covenant with the people of Israel and thus summoned all the people in Shiloh. There the Lord appeared to him in a dream delivering the words concerning the covenant and divine promise for the people (*L.A.B.* 23:2-14).¹⁴

¹² Barbara Geller, “Judaism,” in *Sex and Religion*. Ed. by Christel Manning (Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), 99.

¹³ As VanderKam points out, the divine “accords Enoch a privilege no other angel had.” Hence, he can stand in the divine presence and see the divine face directly without dying. J. C. VanderKam, *Enoch: A Man for All Generations* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 48.

¹⁴ Harrington has observed that *Pseudo-Philo* is the “earliest witness for motifs frequently repeated in the Jewish tradition,” such as Isaac’s birth in the seventh month which was first announced

Likewise, when Eleazar the priest was dying, he saw the appearance of the Lord in his dream, in which the Lord complained that after Eleazar's death the Israelites would soon turn from His covenant and would sin against Him (*L.A.B.* 28:4-5).

Ezekiel the Tragedian describes that Moses in a dream saw a heavenly throne on which sat the divine, be-crowned, with a scepter in one hand. The divine beckoned Moses to approach the throne and then gave him the scepter as well as the crown (68-82). *2 Enoch* reports that the Lord manifested Himself to Methuselah and Nir in their dreams, telling them about the upcoming great destruction of the earth. Each dreamer arose from their sleep and "blessed the Lord who had appeared to him" (*2 En.* 69:4-6; 70:3-13; 71:27-31).

In a dream Levi, invited by the Lord, entered the uppermost heaven, the Holy of Holies. He trembled violently when he saw the Lord face to face (*T. Levi* 2:1-5:7). In *Jewish Antiquity*, God appeared to Nathan in a dream and instructed him with what he should say to David concerning the king's desire to build a temple for God's ark (*Ant.* 7.90-93). It is noteworthy that both Greco-Roman literature and Hellenistic Jewish literature preserved numerous accounts of dream epiphany. However, while many of the accounts in the former delineate the physical appearance of the divine seen by the dreamers, this is completely lacking in the latter.¹⁵

At least two Jewish canonical passages (Ex 33:11 and Num 12:8) apparently proclaim that no one has the privilege to see God.¹⁶ Nevertheless, in the Jewish

by the divine in Joshua's dream, in which epiphany took place (*L.A.B.* 23). D.J. Harrington, *Pseudo-Philo*, in *OTP* 2:300.

¹⁵ The attempt of Hellenistic Jewish dream texts to avoid depicting the physical appearance of the divine may be influenced by the biblical tradition, which regards this depiction as blasphemy. On the other hand, like Greco-Roman texts, Hellenistic Jewish texts contain several dream accounts which illustrate the physical appearance of angels (or oneiric messengers) seen by dreamers (e.g. *2 En.* 1:3-10). Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers*, 40, 124-126.

¹⁶ Scholars have debated whether Moses had the privilege to see God's face. The problem arises mainly from two passages whose statements contradict each other: Ex 33:11 ("the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face") and Ex 33:20 ("you [Moses] cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and

Hellenistic texts dreams granted this privilege to several central figures in Israel's sacred history. Dreams facilitated their encounter with God and enabled them to see the divine appearance in their sleep.¹⁷ The divine manifestation in their dreams confirms dreams as a site of epiphany.

4. Dreams as Essential Messages

The majority of dreams in the Hellenistic Jewish texts can be categorised as message dreams.¹⁸ Message dreams may originate with the divine, the angels, the dead or some unknown source, yet they all serve to transmit essential messages. Some of them confer extraordinary knowledge concerning the fates of the dreamers, their family members, their descendants or even the earth; others bestow a divine sanction or impart a divine promise or guidance; still others issue vital information to the dreamers at the crucial moment of their lives.

a. Dream Messages from the Divine

Most early Jewish dreams relate the divine messages regardless of who delivers or interprets them. The messages are given to the Jews and the pagans as well. The most remarkable message dream in early Jewish texts is perhaps Enoch's dream in *1 Enoch*, the book which exercised a profound influence on both the Jewish and Christian literatures of the first three centuries A.D.¹⁹ When Enoch was hidden

live"). Andrei Orlov has investigated this issue from the broader Jewish extrabiblical tradition and has offered a convincing solution. Andrei Orlov, "God's Face in the Enochic Tradition," in *SBLSS* 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 179-193.

¹⁷ Oppenheim remarks that in the ancient Near East, dreams function as "a cushion to soften the contact between god and man" so that the latter will not be terrified while seeing the divine. Oppenheim, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 192.

¹⁸ The dream message may be presented in a symbolic form (which requires interpretation for knowing the hidden meaning of the dream in most cases) or an auditory form (which is understandable without interpretation in most cases), or in a form combining both.

¹⁹ The dream messages in *1 Enoch* were frequently quoted or used by Jewish authors, such as the authors of *Jub.*, *2 Bar.*, *4 Ezra*, and *T. 12P*, and also by Christian writers, including Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Jerome, and Augustine. Moreover, Charles asserts that the

in a place which no one on the earth knew, the Holy and Great One sent him dream messages which did not target the dreamer himself or other humans, but the angels (13:8-14:3). Enoch's dream possesses two unique features. Firstly, the divine dream message was conveyed to the heavenly beings through a human dreamer (i.e. in this case humanity as the messenger between divinity and angelity), unlike most other dream messages in antiquity which travelled in the opposite direction. Secondly, this dream narrative describes that the holy angel Uriel wrote down the dream messages for Enoch (i.e. recording what Enoch had seen and heard in dreams), unlike most other ancient dream narratives in which the dreamers were demanded by angels to write down the dream messages (33:4).

In *Testament of Abraham*, Isaac had a symbolic message dream (ὄνειρος)²⁰ concerning his father Abraham, which was dispatched by God and then interpreted by the archangel Michael. After hearing Michael's interpretation and knowing his impending death, Abraham requested a wish from God which later came true by divine assistance before his departure from life (5:6-7:12).

When King Solomon finished the work of constructing the temple, he moved the ark into it. Thereupon he offered sacrifices as well as praying to God publicly. That night, God gave the king in his dream the divine promise that God would preserve the temple and abide in it for all time if the king and his people kept doing what was just and were faithful to God (*Ant.* 8.125-129).²¹ Monobazus, the pagan

influence of *I Enoch* on the New Testament "has been greater than that of all the other apocryphal and pseudepigraphal books taken together." R.H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1893), 33-53.

²⁰ While the term for dream is ὄνειρος in Isaac's dream account of Recension A, the term is ὄναρ in that of Recension B. For discussion of the terminological and narrative differences between Isaac's dream in *T. Abr.* Recension A and B, and their implications, see Jared Ludlow, *Abraham Meets Death* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 127-129, 162-164.

²¹ *Ant.* 8.125-129 parallels 1 Kings 9:1-9 and 2 Chr 7:11-22. Whereas the former passage mentions the term "dream" twice explicitly, the term appears in neither of the latter two biblical passages, which are still regarded by some scholars (e.g. Gnuse, see his *Dream Reports*, 85) as the

king of Adiabene, also obtained divine messages through a dream about the infant in his wife's womb (*Ant.* 20:17-20).

b. Dream Messages from the Angels

It is very common in the Hellenistic Jewish texts that divine messages are announced by the angels in dreams. As Philo asserted, "Divine word proclaims as dreams" not only those under the direct action of God, but also those which "are revealed through the agency of His interpreters and attendant messengers who have been held meet to receive from the Father to Whom they owe their being a divine and happy portion (*De Som.* 1.190)."

Jacob planned to build up the court at Bethel and erect a wall around it in order to sanctify the place. However, a dream message spoken by an angel prevented him from building that place and directed him back to his fatherland (*Jub.* 32:16-26). Commanded by the Lord, the archangel Michael informed Nir in his dream that Michael was going to take his child Melkisedek and place him in the paradise of Eden in order to protect him from the imminent destruction of the earth by the great flood. Nir got up in the morning and found his child taken away (*2 En.* J 72:1-11).²²

c. Dream Messages from the Dead

In addition to the divine and angels, the dead could also relay messages to living persons in dreams.²³ Hasan-Rokem has aptly remarked that dreams in early Jewish culture served "as a major vehicle to revitalize dead others as actual presences

biblical account of Solomon's second dream. For comparison between Josephus' and the biblical account of the Solomon's dream, see Christopher Begg, *Judean Antiquities Books 8-10* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 35-36.

²² For other dream messages conveyed by angels, see: 4 Ezra 3:1-5:20, 5:21-6:16, 6:35-9:25, 9:26-10:59; *T. Job* 3:14; and *2 En.* 1:3-10.

²³ Flannery-Dailey argues that early Judaism's concept that the deceased function as messengers in dreams is in "true Graeco-Roman fashion." This concept "would be anathema to biblical authors." Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers*, 125.

in the lives of dreamers.”²⁴

Josephus provides a notable account in which the deceased appears in dreams and speaks to the living dreamer. Glaphyra, the daughter of Archelaus, king of Cappadocia, was reproached in a dream by her deceased husband, Alexander, the son of Herod and brother of Archelaus, for her unfaithfulness. She was also told that he would have her back soon. After relating this dream to her companions, she hardly survived two days (*J.W.* 2.114-116; *Ant.* 17.349-353).

d. Dream Messages from an Unknown Source

Some Hellenistic Jewish texts describe dream messages in detail, but provide no information concerning the source of the dreams. For example, after Judah began to mourn and made supplication to the Lord on account of his evil deed that he lay with his daughter-in-law Tamar, he received a dream derived from some unknown source. The dream conveyed a detailed message regarding the reasons why he was forgiven (*Jub.* 41:23-25).²⁵

Dreams in early Jewish texts were mainly utilised by the divine, the angels, the dead or some unknown source as a means of carrying messages. Those messages always related foreknowledge or significant information. Numerous dream messages were concerned not merely with dreamers, but also with their descendants, that is, the Jewish readership of the Hellenistic and Roman eras.

5. Dreams as a Mode of Divine Revelation

Dreams were considered by many writers of Hellenistic Judaism as a medium

²⁴ Galit Hasan-Rokem, “Communication with the Dead in Jewish Dream Culture,” in *Dream Cultures*. Ed. by David Shulman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 217.

²⁵ For other dreams derived from an unknown resource, see: *Jub.* 35:1-27; 41:23-25; *J.W.* 1.328; *Ant.* 14.451; *Ap.* 1.206-207; and *Life.* 208-210.

of divine revelation. Several pseudepigraphic protagonists acquired divine knowledge or hidden secrets through dreams. Divine revelation could also bequeath through dreams to those who had a pure and spotless soul.

In *1 Enoch* the Great One by dreams disclosed the divine words of righteousness and the chastisement of the fallen angels to Enoch, the righteous scribe. He also by the same method divulged hidden secrets to Enoch, including the future resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, the description of Sheol and the final place of punishment (*1 En.* 13-36).²⁶

According to *Jubilees*, Enoch was the first to learn writing among those born on the earth, and also the first to write a testimony about what he saw in his dream, which showed what “will happen among the children of men in their generation until the day of judgment” (*Jub.* 4:17-19).

4 Ezra narrates that the angel Uriel imparted to Ezra in his dreams the true understanding of this world as well as cosmological and eschatological revelations (such as the signs of the approaching end of the age, the time of the arrival of the new age and the division of the times) which neither Ezra nor anyone who dwelled on the earth had ever known (3:1-5:20, 5:21-6:16, 6:35-9:25).²⁷

In *2 Enoch*, the Lord through a dream revealed His will to Methuselah, disclosing that because of the very evil confusion on the earth, He would command

²⁶ Charles believes that *1 Enoch* 13-36 was “the first to mention the resurrection of the righteous, to describe Sheol according to the conception accepted later in the New Testament as opposed to that of the Old Testament, and to represent Gehenna as the final place of punishment.” In this regard, its content in part can be viewed as divine revelation, even from the early Christian perspective. In fact, it was even regarded as Scripture by the author of *Epistle of Barnabas*, Athenagoras and Tertullian. Charles, *Enoch*, 26 and 39.

²⁷ The fact that the sentence “the Most High has revealed many secrets to you,” or the like, repeatedly appears in 4 Ezra (e.g. 10:38, 52, 58) may reflect the author’s belief (or expression) that his writing (the dream narratives of Ezra) is divinely revelatory, holding “great secrets” of the Most High (10:38). For discussion of dream revelation in 4 Ezra, see Michael Stone, *Fourth Ezra* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 334-336, 372-374, 428-431.

the Bottomless to rush out over the earth and also the storage of heavenly water to come down onto to the world, which would then quake and perish. But He would preserve Noah, from whose seed He would raise up another world. The Lord also enjoined him to recount the divine revelation in the dream to his people (2 *En.* 70:3-13).

Philo asserted that God would not disdain to endow knowledge of heavenly things by means of dreams to souls completely purified and cleansed (*Aet. Mund.* 2).²⁸ Philo's assertion indicates that Enoch's or Ezra's acquisition of divine revelation through dreams must have resulted from the purity and perfection of their souls, as only the one with an immaculate soul was able to obtain divine revelation through dreams.

From the perspective of Hellenistic Jewish writers, it seems that dreams, due to their unique character and significant function as a prevalent medium of communication between divinity and humanity in both the biblical tradition and in Greco-Roman culture, were able to facilitate the writers' articulations of apocalyptic or eschatological ideas, and also to legitimise their theological beliefs or agenda which they attempted to express in the context of Hellenistic Judaism. From the perspective of their audience, on the other hand, Gnuse has argued that Israelites treated the encounter with the divine or the divine words in their dreams as a real incident and highly respected the experience of dreams. Accordingly, "God might choose the dream as a mode of revelation."²⁹ Eventually we find dreams as a favorable mode of divine revelation in Judeo-Hellenistic works.³⁰

²⁸ In another place Philo notes that the beauty of the divine virtues and of the divine powers is also presented to the eyes of the devout in their dreams (*Vit. Cont.* 26).

²⁹ Gnuse, *Dream Reports*, 68-69.

³⁰ For other accounts of divine revelation unveiled by dreams, see: 1 *En.* 83-90; 4 *Ezra* 9:26-10:59, 11:1-12:3, 13:1-13, 14:1-16:78; 2 *Bar.* 36:1-43:3, 52:7-53:12; *Ezek. Trag.* 67-89; and *T.*

6. Dreams as Prophecy

Similarly to Greco-Roman literature, mantic dreams abound in the Hellenistic Jewish texts. Most, if not all, of them were inspired by the divine. Their predictions are associated not only with the dreamers, but chiefly with the eminent figures of early Israelite history, their family members or the fate of Israel.

In *Jubilees*, Jacob at Bethel in a dream foresaw what would happen to him and his sons throughout all the ages. He was also asked by an angel to write down all of the matters which he had seen in this premonitory dream (32:16-26). In addition, Rebecca told her son Jacob that she would soon die because she had seen in a dream the day of her death. Jacob laughed at the words of his mother, because strength was in her, and no disease had touched her all the days of her life. However, shortly after their conversation he buried her, as presaged by the dream (*Jub.* 35:1-27).

Before Jochebed, the wife of Amram (Moses' father), had conceived Moses, Miriam's prophetic dream annunciated the future birth and prominence of Moses, through whom God would work signs and save the Israelites (*L.A.B.* 9:10). According to Josephus, however, it was Amram's dream, rather than Miriam's, that predicted the greatness of Moses (*Ant.* 3.210-216).

During his rule over Judea, Archelaus had a symbolic dream and thus sent for diviners. Simon, an Essene, interpreted the dream as denoting the impending end of his government. On the fifth day after this dream, Caesar's summon regarding the termination of his dominion arrived (*Ant.* 17.245-348; *J.W.* 2.112-113).

One of the most well-known Jewish mantic dreams is Josephus' dream reported by himself in his *Jewish Wars* 3.338-355. When the Roman troops

Levi 2-5.

demolished the fortress of Jotapata, Josephus, a priest and a leader of the Jewish revolt, resisted surrendering and hid in a cave with other survivors. Because of his admiration for the valor of Josephus, the Roman general Vespasian did not send soldiers to kill him, but instead sent two tribunes to induce him to capitulate. Nonetheless Josephus flatly refused to comply.

As the third tribune, Nicanor, a friend of Josephus, was earnestly persuading him to succumb, he suddenly recalled the dreams which God had lately given him. At this very moment, by the divine inspiration he was now able to understand the true meaning of those dreams, and realised that God had foreshown to him through those dreams “the approaching calamities of the Jews and the destinies of the Roman sovereigns.” He also further believed that God had chosen him as a minister as well as a prophet to foretell the things to come.³¹ Hence he willingly surrendered to the Romans and consented to live.³²

It seems that Josephus’ divinely-sent dreams at Jotapata, and their divinely-inspired interpretation, not only predicted future events but legitimised Josephus as a newly divine-chosen prophet who was capable of receiving and interpreting mantic dreams exactly as Daniel (who lived under foreign rule) had,³³ and who would also announce the divine messages to both Jews and pagans exactly

³¹ Compared with other dreams in Jewish texts, Josephus’ dreams were exceptional. As Flannery-Dailey has observed, unlike most other Jewish dreams, Josephus’ dreams concern only his future elevation, but never that of his family, descendants, or other Jews. Secondly, whereas most Jewish dream narratives demonstrate God’s providential care for Israel, Josephus’ dream proclaims that “good fortune has wholly passed to the Romans” and implies Roman sovereignty over Israel (*J.W.* 3.354). Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers*, 138-139.

³² In the entire works of Josephus there are two accounts reporting his own dreams; each account states that Josephus received divine guidance in his dreams. Interestingly, while the first dream (*Life*. 208-210) urged him to fight with the Romans, the other (*J.W.* 3.338-355) inspired him to surrender to them.

³³ Koet, *Dreams and Scripture*, 40-43; Frederick Bruce, “Josephus and Daniel,” in *ASTI* 4 (1965), 148-162.

as Jeremiah (who proclaimed a non-Jewish world ruler) had.³⁴

Hellenistic Jewish dreams could foreshadow things to come, especially eschatological events. Their prophecies primarily concerned those who played significant roles in Israelite history and its development. They also expressly showed divine favor to the Israelites. Even the dream prediction of the rise of a pagan king or an unallied empire purposed to manifest divine providential care for Israel and its people. Dreams in the Hellenistic texts, therefore, can be deemed as prophecy and also as a demonstration of divine favoritism.³⁵

7. Dreams as Otherworldly Journeys

Dreams in the Hellenistic Jewish texts bestowed several pseudepigraphic protagonists with access to some places where they could never possibly go while awake. Dreams also offered them the capability to transcend the spatial as well as temporal limits, and thus the possibility of having otherworldly journeys or seeing things which happened in the past and the future.

Enoch's dream journeys (*I En.* 13-36, 83-90) consisted of both spatial and temporal dimensions. Spatially, Enoch in his dreams travelled to heaven or "the heavenly temple,"³⁶ and Sheol (14-15, 21-22). He saw the foundation of the earth

³⁴ Gnuse, *Dream Reports*, 135-142, 198. Some scholars question that God actually foretold such things to Josephus by dreams; they suggest that Josephus simply fabricated the dreams and their interpretations in order to defend his cowardice and justify his treason as accused by later Jews. See Tessa Rajak, *Josephus* (London: Duckworth, 1983), 169-173; S.J.D. Cohen, "Alexander the Great and Jaddus the High Priest According to Josephus," in *AJSR*, Vol. 7 (1982), 41-68. Arnaldo Momigliano, "Flavius Josephus and Alexander's Visit to Jerusalem," in *Essays on Ancient and Modern Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 79-87.

³⁵ The majority of dreams in both 4 Ezra and *Testament of Twelve Patriarchs* premonish the things that must take place in their appropriate time or in the last days. See 4 Ezra 3:1-5:20, 5:21-6:16, 6:35-9:25, 9:26-10:59, 11:1-12:3, 13:1-13, 14:1-16:78; *T. Naph.* 5:1-7:4; and *T. Jos.* 19:1-12. For other prophetic dreams, see: *I En.* 83-90; *Jub.* 4:17-19; *Ezek. Trag.* 67-89; *T. Levi* 2-5; *J.W.* 1.328, 3.351-354; *Ant.* 5.215-216, 14.451; and Philo's *Migr. Abr.* 190.

³⁶ Himmelfarb has expounded the understanding of heaven as the heavenly temple in the Book of Watchers (*I En.* 1-36). Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*

and the path of angels (18). He was also taken to the chambers of stars and thunders, to the occidental fire which provides all the sunsets, and to the paradise, Garden of Eden (17, 28).

Temporally, he saw not only the scenes of primeval history and past figures (illustrated in symbolic-animal forms),³⁷ including Adam, Eve, their children and the fallen angels (85-86), but also future events, such as the Deluge,³⁸ the exodus, the final judgment and the construction of a new Jerusalem (87-90).³⁹ From the narrative perspective, it seems that the author's ingenious articulation of the idea, in which the two dimensions are intertwined in Enoch's dream journeys and reinforce each other, attempts to make the dream narrative more dynamic and its messages more powerful to its audience.⁴⁰

According to *Testament of Levi*, in a dream Levi ascended to the first heaven which contained fire, ready for the day of the divine judgment and the punishment of mankind, and then to the second heaven in which the armies arrayed for the day of judgment to wreak vengeance on the spirits of error and of Beliar. Finally, he mounted the third heaven,⁴¹ the uppermost heaven, where the Holy One dwelled in

(NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), 14-16.

³⁷ The text of *1 En.* 83-90 has been labeled as the "Animal Apocalypse." Several scholars have elucidated the reasons and sources for the portrayal of humans and angels as animals in the text. See Patrick Tiller, *A Commentary on the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993). G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 354-408. Gabriele Boccaccini (ed.), *Enoch and Qumran Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 17-38.

³⁸ The Deluge should be regarded as a "future" event from Enoch's antediluvian perspective.

³⁹ According to the extant texts, it is very likely that no one in antiquity (and probably in human history as well) has ever travelled spatially further, or diachronically wider, than Enoch, regardless of whether the travelling is experienced in dreams or not.

⁴⁰ Nickelsburg has cogently remarked that the narrative of Enoch's journey provides "spatial reinforcement for the temporally oriented divine oracles issued against the rebel watchers...Space complements and reinforces time." Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 278.

⁴¹ In some forms of the text (α) of *T. Levi* 3:1-8 depict seven heavens, rather than three. See H.C. Kee, *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, in *OTP* 2:788, note 2.d; in 2 Cor 12:2, Paul mentions the third heaven. For discussion, see A.Y. Collins, "The Seven Heavens in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses," in *Death, Ecstasy, and Otherworldly Journeys* (NY: State University of New York, 1995), 57-93.

the Holy of Holies superior to all holiness (2:5-3:5).

Ezekiel the Tragedian narrates that Moses in a dream went to the peak of Sinai and saw a great throne, which touched heaven, and on which sat a man of noble mien, be-crowned, and with a scepter in hand. The man bade Moses mount the throne. From thence Moses saw the underworld, the whole earth and things above the skies. At his feet a multitude of stars fell down (68-82).

Early Jewish texts underscore the idea that dreams enabled several noble figures in Israelite history to journey to some realms where living people could never enter. By dreams those figures travelled to the underworld, to the remote regions of the earth, and to the heaven realm, or saw the primordial past and the future world. Hence, dreams can be reckoned as otherworldly journeys.⁴²

8. Dreams as a Locale for Ontological Transformation

In Hellenistic Jewish literature, several dreamers underwent ontological transformations, especially during⁴³ their otherworldly dream journeys. In most cases the dreamers were transformed into heavenly priests or angelic beings. In their dreams, heaven became not merely accessible but co-operative and inhabitable to them, while dreams functioned as a locale for their ontological shift.

Despite being a human, Enoch was invited by the Lord in a dream to enter the immediate presence of the Great One,⁴⁴ the heavenly and ultimate Holy of Holies,

⁴² For another account of otherworldly journeys in dreams, see: *Ladd. Jac.* 1:1-2:4. In addition, 4 Ezra 9:26-10:59 may be regarded as an otherworldly dream journey, although the text itself does not clearly show this. For the argument, see Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers*, 194-197.

⁴³ Some dreamers experienced ontological transformations after (rather than during) their dream journeys (namely, after awaking from the dream). For example, 2 *En.* 22:6-11, 67:1-3.

⁴⁴ Nickelsburg has convincingly argued that “Enoch actually enters the room” and “stands in the divine presence,” although the text does not explicitly say so. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 269-270. Himmelfarb suggests that Enoch must pass the vestibule and then the nave and finally reach the inner sanctuary, Holy of Holies. Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 14.

where no one (including the angels) could even approach (*I En.* 14:8-16:3). There he interceded with the Great One on behalf of the Watchers (fallen angels) and also became a divine messenger delivering the Great One's message to them (12:1-16:3). Moreover, he saw what no one among humans had ever seen (19:3) and went to the netherworld where a living person could not be (21-22).

As Flannery-Dailey has noticed, "Ontologically, Enoch, a living human being, is able to enter the heavenly *hekhāl*, which is a holy space inhabited by divine beings, and he is able to see the realm of the dead without dying."⁴⁵ VanderKam asserts that Enoch was doing "what angels should do for humanity."⁴⁶ All these may imply both that Enoch's status was elevated to a position of equality with, if not superiority to, the angels, and that he was transformed into a heavenly priest (performing the intercession at the heavenly Holy of Holies) or something other than a human being.

Hence, Enoch's remarkable feat for the visit to *hekhāl* and Sheol is based on the idea either that he was ontologically transformed in dreams, or that the constraint of his ontological substance was suspended while he was experiencing otherworldly journeys in dreams. Either case confirms the occurrence of ontological transition in dreams.

Likewise, Levi in a dream ascended to the highest heaven and saw the presence of the Holy Most High in the Holy of Holies, surrounded by archangels, who served by offering propitiatory sacrifices and presenting a rational and bloodless oblation to the Lord. There the divine gave Levi the blessing of the priesthood, and he became the divine priest in the heavenly temple (*T. Levi* 2-5).⁴⁷ All these

⁴⁵ Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers*, 175.

⁴⁶ VanderKam, *Enoch*, 48.

⁴⁷ In another dream, the angels anointed Levi with the holy oil, fed him with holy wine, and clothed him in a holy vestment of the priesthood. Finally the angel placed the priestly diadem on his head and filled his hands with incense, in order that he could "serve as priest for the Lord God"

descriptions may denote that in order to stand and serve in the divine presence, Levi, an earthly person, was in his dream transformed into a heavenly priest, doing what only the archangels could do.⁴⁸

The Hellenistic Jewish texts illustrate that several pseudepigraphic figures in dreams were transformed from human beings into heavenly priests or angelic beings. Dreams became a special site within which ontological bondage could be overcome, and an ontological shift take place. In this regard, dreams can be seen as a locale for ontological transformation.⁴⁹

9. Dreams as Reinforcement of Faith

In the Hellenistic Jewish tradition, God could utilise dreams to reinforce the faith of the Israelites. This was most common with regard to the heroes, leaders or priests in the Jewish community, particularly when they were in a predicament or in perilous plight. Sometimes, God would also exercise dreams to strengthen a pagan king's faith in order to protect and advance the interests of God's people. In *Jewish Antiquities*, there is a double-dream report in which two dreams, one received by a Jewish high priest and the other by a pagan king, are closely intertwined and greatly enhance the faith of each dreamer.

The high priest Jaddua was in agony and under sheer terror when the Macedonian king Alexander and his army were approaching Jerusalem in order to

(8:1-19). Textually, Levi's two dreams (2-5 and 8) legitimise his and his posterity's priesthood. On the other hand, Segal contends that they contextually reflect "the Hasmonean Dynasty trying to legitimate its priestly claims. The heavenly journey of Levi confirms the legitimacy of priestly institutions in Israelite culture." A.F. Segal, "Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity, and their Environment," in *ANRW*. II.23.2 (1980), 1360. For a different view from Segal's, see Robert Kugler, *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 51-53.

⁴⁸ Himmelfarb has explicated the roles and jobs of both Enoch and Levi as a priest in the heavenly temple. Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 20-28, 29-46. Also see Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers*, 170-191; VanderKam, *Enoch*, 25-49.

⁴⁹ For another account of ontological transformation in dreams, see: *Ezek. Trag.* 68-89.

siege the city and to kill him, as the king was absolutely furious due to his resistance. Jaddua ordained that people should join with him in offering sacrifices to God. Whereupon God said to Jaddua in his dream that he should take courage without the dread of any ill consequence, which the divine providence would prevent, as well as instructing him with what he should do upon the king's arrival.⁵⁰ After Jaddua rose from his sleep, he greatly rejoiced with strong faith and waited for the coming of the king without fear.

When the king met Jaddua, who followed the divine instruction to stand clothed in his purple and scarlet habit, the king immediately recalled a dream he recently had in which he saw the very person (whom the king did not know at that time) dressed in the very same habit. That dream also imparted that this person would give the king dominion over the Persians. At this moment, the king recognised that the person in his dream was Jaddua. He then believed his dream to be divinely-inspired and his encounter with Jaddua to be divinely-directed.

Thereupon, the king saluted Jaddua, offered sacrifice to God according to Jaddua's direction, and granted all the desires of the Jews. After meeting with Jaddus and understanding the meaning of his dream, the king then had great faith in his power for conquering the Persian army, and his forthcoming victory (*Ant.*

11.313-339). Evidently, these two dreams not only prescribed "the attitude of Alexander towards the Jews as well as the attitude of the Jews towards him" as Koet

⁵⁰ Considering Jaddua's situation, his actions before sleep (e.g. prayer, making sacrificial offerings) and the timing that his dream occurred, it seems that Jaddua's dream is a clear example of what Oppenheim has called the "incubation-dreams provoked and experienced by priests" in order to "obtain divine help and advice." Oppenheim, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 188. For discussion of Jaddua's practice of dream incubation, see Gnuse, "The Temple Experience of Jaddus," in *JQR*, Vol. 83 (1993), 349 -368. For other typical examples of dream incubation in Hellenistic Jewish texts, see *2 Bar.* 34-36 and *2 En.* 70:1-13. It is noteworthy that early Jewish literature is destitute of reports that people practiced dream incubation for physical illness, while these reports abound in Greco-Roman literature.

has noted,⁵¹ but plucked up the courage of the dreamers and reinforced their faith when they were desperate or without confidence.

This double-dream report illuminates the Hellenistic Jewish idea that dreams could be employed by the divine as an instrumental agent to strengthen the faith of God's chosen people, especially when they faced great difficulties. Dreams worked in part like divine words in Scripture, the words spoken by God's prophets, or divine signs and miracles, to undergird people's trust and hope in God. Dreams hence can be considered as a reinforcement of faith.

Conclusion

According to the extant works, none of the writers of Hellenistic Judaism ever proposed a dream theory systematically, while Philo is very likely the only one among them who formulated a dream typology. Their lack of interest in developing dream theory or taxonomy does not necessarily lead to a negative or neglectful disposition towards dreams. Rather, dreams never functioned as a tangential theme in non-canonical Hellenistic Jewish texts, but often as a critical motif, which not only profoundly extends the dynamics of textual narratives but which facilitates the articulation of, or provides fertile grounds nurturing, the ideas of apocalypse, cosmology, eschatology, otherworldly journeys and ontological transformation.

The Hellenistic Jewish literature reflects manifold views of dreams. In that, some dreams could render dreamers ritually impure whereas others were the sacred place for the encounter between divinity and humanity. Still others conveyed divine sanction and revelation. Through dreams people could obtain important messages from the divine, the angels or even the deceased. Finally, dreams had mantic power

⁵¹ Koet, *Dreams and Scripture*, 38.

and also the capacity to bolster people's faith.

The scale of the matters or issues which early Jewish dreams were concerned with was much broader than that of Greco-Roman dreams, covering individually from the birth of a child to the sexual intercourse of a high priest, prophetically from the fate of an unfaithful wife to that of heavenly angels, salvifically from the forgiveness of a sinner to the delivery of a nation, politically from the surrender of a leader of Jewish rebellion to the exaltation of pagan kings, spatially from the worldly Jerusalem to the heavenly Temple, or from Sheol to the chamber of lightning, temporally from the primordial events to the final judgment at the end of the world, ontologically from the transformation into an angel to that of a transformation into a heavenly priest, and cosmologically from the catastrophe of the earth to the future of the universe.

Despite the variety of their content, almost all dreams ultimately demonstrated the divine sanction of, as well as the divinely providential care for, the heroes of Israelite sacred history, their descendants and even the Jewish readership. In short, the nature of dreams, from the perspective of the Hellenistic Jewish dream tradition, can be seen as impurity, as a site of epiphany, as essential messages, as a mode of divine revelation, as prophecy, as otherworldly journeys, as a locale for ontological transformation or as reinforcement of faith.

Appendix B
 Table of Dreams in Non-Canonical Hellenistic Jewish Texts

| Text | Recipient | Source | Terminology | Nature of the Dream as | Biblical Ref. |
|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|---|---------------|
| 1 Enoch (1 En.) | | | | | |
| 12-36 | Enoch | the Holy and Great One | (n.) በሕልም (in Ethiopic) | Site of Epiphany, Messages from the Divine, Mode of Divine Revelation, Otherworldly Journeys, Ontological Transformation. | (devoid) |
| 83-90 | Enoch | the Lord | (n.) ሕልም | Messages from the Divine, Mode of Divine Revelation, Otherworldly Journeys, Ontological Transformation. | (devoid) |
| Jubilees (Jub.) | | | | | |
| 4:17-19 | Enoch | (unknown) | (CḤP ስራ-ḤP) | Mode of Divine Revelation, Prophecy. | (devoid) |
| 14:1-17 | (Retell Abram's vision) | | (n.) በሕልም | (Retell biblical dream) | Gen 15:1-17 |
| 27:19-26 | (Retell Jacob's dream) | | (v.) ወሐሐም | (Retell biblical dream) | Gen 28:10-22 |

| | | | | | |
|----------|------------------|-----------|---------------|------------------------------------|----------|
| 32:20-26 | Jacob | Angel | (מַלְאָכִים) | Messages from the Angel, Prophecy. | (devoid) |
| 35:1-27 | Rebecca (female) | (unknown) | (n.) אֱלֹהִים | Prophecy | (devoid) |
| 41:23-25 | Judah | (unknown) | (n.) אֱלֹהִים | Messages from Unknown Source | (devoid) |

Pseudo-Philo (Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum) (L.A.B.)

| | | | | |
|---------|--------------------------|--|---|---------------------------|
| 8:10 | (Retell Pharaoh's dream) | (n.) <i>somnium</i> | (Retell biblical dream) | Gen 41:1-45 |
| 9:10 | Miriam (female) | God | (n.) <i>somnium</i> (or עִתָּן in the Hebrew fragments) | Prophecy (devoid) |
| 18:4-8 | (Retell Balaam's dream) | (<i>Et dixit ad eum Deus per noctem...Et levavit se mane.</i>) | (Retell biblical dream) | Num 28:10-20 |
| 23:2-14 | Joshua | the Lord | (n.) <i>visus</i> (from <i>visio</i>) | Site of Epiphany (devoid) |
| 28:4-5 | Eleazar | the Lord | (n.) <i>somnis</i> (from <i>somnium</i>) | Site of Epiphany (devoid) |

4 Ezra (4 Ezra)

| | | | | | |
|-----------|------|-------------|--|---|----------|
| 3:1-5:20 | Ezra | Angel Uriel | (<i>conturbatus sum super cubili meo recumbens...et evigilavi</i>) | Messages from the Angel, Mode of Divine Revelation, Prophecy. | (devoid) |
| 5:21-6:16 | Ezra | Angel Uriel | (<i>..demonstres servo tuo finem signorum tuorum quorum ex</i>) | Messages from the Angel, Mode of Divine Revelation, | (devoid) |

| | | | | | |
|--|--------|---------------|---|---|----------|
| | | | <i>parte mihi demonstrasti nocte praecedente..)</i> | Prophecy. | |
| 6:35-9:25 | Ezra | Angel Uriel | (... <i>ad me angelus qui missus fuerat ad me primis noctibus et dixit...</i>) | Messages from the Angel, Mode of Divine Revelation, Prophecy. | (devoid) |
| 9:26-10:59 | Ezra | Angel Uriel | (n.) <i>somnium</i> | Messages from the Angel, Mode of Divine Revelation, Prophecy, Otherworldly Journeys. | (devoid) |
| 11:1-12:3 | Ezra | the Most High | (n.) <i>somnium</i> | Mode of Divine Revelation, | (devoid) |
| 13:1-13 | Ezra | the Most High | (n.) <i>somnium</i> | Mode of Divine Revelation, | (devoid) |
| 2 Baruch (2 Bar.) | | | | | |
| 36:1-43:3 | Baruch | the Lord | (n.) ܠܗܘܐ (in Syriac) | Mode of Divine Revelation | (devoid) |
| 52:7-53:12 | Baruch | the Most High | (n.) ܠܗܘܐ | Mode of Divine Revelation | (devoid) |
| Ezekiel the Tragedian (Ezek. Trag.) | | | | | |
| 68-89 | Moses | God | (ἐξαιρίσται ἔξ ὑμῶν) | Site of Epiphany, Messages from the Divine, Mode of Divine Revelation, Prophecy, Otherworldly Journeys, | (devoid) |

| | | | | | |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--------------|
| | | | | Ontological Transformation. | |
| | | | | | |
| Testament of Job (<i>T. Job</i>) | | | | | |
| 3:1-4 | Jacob | Angel | (ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ κοιμωμένου τοῦ Ἰακώβ) | Messages from the Angel | (devoid) |
| | | | | | |
| 2 Enoch (<i>2 En.</i>) | | | | | |
| 1:3-10 | Enoch | Angels | (N/A, Slavonic version) | Messages from the Angel | (devoid) |
| 69:4-6 | Methuselah | the Lord | (N/A, Slavonic version) | Site of Epiphany; Messages from the Divine. | (devoid) |
| 70:1-13 | Methuselah | the Lord | (N/A, Slavonic version) | Messages from the Divine; Mode of Divine Revelation. | (devoid) |
| 72:1-11 | Nir | Michael (archangel) | (N/A, Slavonic version) | Messages from the Angel | (devoid) |
| | | | | | |
| The Ladder of Jacob (<i>Ladd. Jac.</i>) | | | | | |
| 1:1-2:4 | (Retell Jacob's dream) | | (N/A, Slavonic version) | (Retell biblical dream) | Gen 28:10-22 |
| | | | | | |
| Testament of Abraham (<i>T. Abr.</i>) | | | | | |
| A 5:6-7:12 | Isaac | God | (n.) ὄνειρος (from ὄνειρος) | Messages from the Divine | (devoid) |
| B 4:16 | Isaac | God | (n.) ὄνυξ | Messages from the Divine | (devoid) |

| Testament of Levi (<i>T. Levi</i>) | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---|---|----------|
| 2:1-5:7 | Levi | The Lord | (τότε ἐπέτεσεν ἐπ' ἐμέ ὕμνος καὶ ἐθεασάμην ὄρος ὀψηλόν) | Site of Epiphany, Messages from the Divine, Mode of Divine Revelation, Otherworldly Journeys, Ontological Transformation. | (devoid) |
| 8:1-19 | Levi | The Lord | (Καὶ ἐπὶ πάλιν εἶδον πρᾶγμα ὥσπερ τὸ πρότερον...καὶ ἐξυπνισθεὶς συνήκα ὅτι τοῦτο ὅμοιον ἐκείνου ἐστίν.) | Messages from the Divine, Mode of Divine Revelation, Otherworldly Journeys, Ontological Transformation. | (devoid) |
| Testament of Naphtali (<i>T. Naph.</i>) | | | | | |
| 5:1-7:4 | Naphtali | (unknown) | (n.) ἐνύπνια (from ἐνύπνιον) | Prophecy | (devoid) |
| Testament of Joseph (<i>T. Jos.</i>) | | | | | |
| 19:1-12 | Joseph | (unknown) | (n.) ἐνύπνιων (from ἐνύπνιον) | Prophecy | (devoid) |
| Philo's Works | | | | | |
| The Migration of Abraham (<i>Migr. Abr.</i>) | | | | | |
| 190 | (Exegeses of Jacob's dream) | (n.) ὀνειρώων (from ὀνειρος) | (Dream Typology) | | (devoid) |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---------------------------|----------------|
| | | | | Prophecy | |
| | | | | | |
| On Dreams (<i>De Som.</i>) | | | | | |
| I. 1-188 | (Exegeses of Jacob's dream) | (n.) ὀνειρώων (from ὄνειρος) (n.) ὄνυρ | (Dream Typology) (Exegeses of Biblical Dreams) | | «Gen 28:12-15) |
| I. 189-256 | (Exegeses of Jacob's dream) | (n.) ὄνειρος (n.) ὄνυρ | (Dream Typology) (Exegeses of Biblical Dreams) | | «Gen 31:11-13) |
| II. 1-154 | (Exegeses of Joseph's dream) | (n.) ὀνειρώων (from ὄνειρος) (n.) ὄνυρ | (Dream Typology) (Exegeses of Biblical Dreams) | | «Gen 37) |
| II. 155-214 | (Exegeses of the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker) | (n.) ὀνειράαα (from ὄνειρος) (n.) ὄνυρ | (Dream Typology) (Exegeses of Biblical Dreams) | | «Gen 40) |
| II. 215-302 | (Exegeses of Pharaoh's dreams) | (n.) ὀνειράαα (from ὄνειρος) (n.) ὄνυρ | (Dream Typology) (Exegeses of Biblical Dreams) | | «Gen 41) |
| On Joseph (<i>De Jos.</i>) | | | | | |
| 95 | (Exegeses of Joseph's dream) | (n.) ὀνειρώων (from ὄνειρος) | (Dream Typology) (Exegeses of Biblical Dreams) | | «Gen 40) |
| On the Contemplative Life (<i>Iti. Cont.</i>) | | | | | |
| 26 | (no content) | (no content) | (n.) ὀνειρώων (from ὄνειρος) | Mode of Divine Revelation | «devoid) |
| On the Eternity of the World (<i>Aet. Mund.</i>) | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|---|--------------|
| 2 | (no content) | (no content) | (n.) ὄνειρον | Messages from the Divine, Mode of Divine Revelation. | (devoid) |
| Josephus' Work | | | | | |
| Jewish Wars (J.W.) | | | | | |
| 1.328 | Herod | (unknown) | (n.) ὄνειροι (from ὄνειρος) | Messages from Unknown Source, Prophecy. | (devoid) |
| 2.112-113 | Archelaus | (unknown) | (n.) ὄνειρον | Prophecy. | (devoid) |
| 2.114-116 | Glaphyra (female) | (dead) Alexander | (n.) ὄνειρον | Messages from the Dead | (devoid) |
| 3.351-354 | Josephus | God | (n.) ὀνειρώων (from ὄνειρος) | Messages from the Divine, Prophecy. | (devoid) |
| Jewish Antiquities (Ant.) | | | | | |
| 1.208-209 | (Retell Abimelech's dream) | | (n.) ὄνειρον | (Retell biblical dream) | Gen 20.3-7 |
| 1.278-284 | (Retell Jacob's dream) | | (n.) ὄψιμιν (from ὄψιμις) | (Retell biblical dream) | Gen 28.10-22 |
| 1.313-314 | (Retell Laban's dream) | | (n.) ὄνειρον | (Retell biblical dream) | Gen 31.24 |
| 1.341 | Jacob | God | (n.) ὀνειρώου (from ὄνειρος) | Prophecy | (devoid) |
| 2.10-12 | (Retell Joseph's dream) | | (n.) ὀνειρώάτων (from ὄνειρος); | (Retell biblical dream) | Gen 37.5-8 |
| | | | (n.) ὄψιμιν (from ὄψιμις) | | |
| 2.13-17 | (Retell Joseph's dream) | | (n.) ὀνειρώατι (from ὄνειρος); | (Retell biblical dream) | Gen 37.9-10 |

| | | | | | |
|-----------|--|-----|---|-------------------------|----------------|
| | | | (n.) ὄψις (from ὄψις) | | |
| 2.63-73 | (Retell dreams of the cupbearer and the baker) | | (n.) ὀνειράτων (from ὄνειρος); (n.) ὄψεως (from ὄψις) | (Retell biblical dream) | Gen 40:1-22 |
| 2.74-93 | (Retell Pharaoh's dreams) | | (n.) ἐνυπνίων (from ἐνυπνίον); (n.) ὀνειράτων (from ὄνειρος); (n.) ὄψις (from ὄψις) | (Retell biblical dream) | Gen 41:1-45 |
| 2.171-176 | (Retell Jacob's dream) | | (n.) ὀνειράτι (from ὄνειρος) | (Retell biblical dream) | Gen 46:1-4 |
| 2.210-217 | Amram | God | (n.) ὀνείρου (from ὄνειρος); (n.) ὄψεως (from ὄψις) | Prophecy | (devoid) |
| 5.193 | Ehud | God | (n.) ὀνειράτος (from ὄνειρος) | (no content) | (devoid) |
| 5.215-216 | Gideon | God | (ἐπιστάς δὲ κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους ὁ θεὸς τῷ Γεδεώνι) | Prophecy | (devoid) |
| 5.218-229 | (Retell the dream of a Midianite man) | | (n.) ὄνυξ; (n.) ὄψιν (from ὄψις) | (Retell biblical dream) | Judges 7:13-15 |
| 7.92-93 | Nathan | God | (τοῦ θεοῦ δὲ κατ' ἐκείνην τὴν νύκτα τῷ Νάθη φανέντος) | Site of Epiphany | 2 Sam 7:4-17 |
| 8.22-25 | (Retell Solomon's dream) | | (τὸν θεὸν τετυμηκέναι φανείας γὰρ αὐτῷ κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους ἐκείνης τῆς νυκτός) | (Retell biblical dream) | 1 Kings 3:4-15 |

| | | | | | |
|------------|----------------------------------|------------------|---|---|------------|
| 8.125-129 | Solomon | God | (n.) ὄνυξ | Messages from the Divine | (devoid) |
| 10.195-212 | (Retell Nebuchadnezzar 's dream) | | (n.) ὄνυξ; (n.) ἐνυπνίου (from ἐνυπνίον); (n.) ὄψιμ (from ὄψις) | (Retell biblical dream) | Dan 2:1-49 |
| 10.216-218 | (Retell Nebuchadnezzar 's dream) | | (n.) ἐνυπνίου (from ἐνυπνίον); (n.) ὄψιμ (from ὄψις) | (Retell biblical dream) | Dan 4:4-37 |
| 11.325-339 | Jaddus/Alexander | God | (n.) ὄψεως (from ὄψις) | Reinforcement of Faith | (devoid) |
| 12.112 | Theopompus | God | (n.) ὄνυξ | Messages from the Divine | (devoid) |
| 14.451 | Herod | (unknown) | (n.) ὀνειρώων (from ὄνειρος); (n.) ὄψις (from ὄψις) | Messages from Unknown Source, Prophecy. | (devoid) |
| 17.165-167 | Matthias | dreamer | (n.) ὀνειράτι (from ὄνειρος) | Impurity | (devoid) |
| 17.345-348 | Archelaus | (unknown) | (n.) ὄνυξ; (n.) ὀνειράτων (from ὄνειρος); (n.) ὄψιμ (from ὄψις) | Prophecy | (devoid) |
| 17.349-353 | Glaphytra (female) | (dead) Alexander | (n.) ὄνυξ | Messages from the Dead | (devoid) |
| 20.17-20 | Monobazus | God | (..ἡνίκα καθύπνωσεν φωνῆς τινοῦ..) | Messages from the Divine | (devoid) |

| | | | | | |
|---|------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------|
| Life of Flavius Josephus (<i>Life</i>) | | | | | |
| 208-210 | Josephus | (unknown) | (n.) ὄνειρον (from ὄνειρος) | Messages from Unknown Source | (devoid) |
| Against Apion (<i>Ap.</i>) | | | | | |
| 1.206-207 | Stratonica (female) | (unknown) | (n.) ἐνυπνίῳ (from ἐνύπνιον) | Messages from Unknown Source | (devoid) |

Appendix C

Biblical Views of Dreams

They said to one another, “Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him...”

— Genesis 37:19

For the dreams that disturbed them
forewarned them of this, so that they might
not perish without knowing why they suffered.

— Wisdom 18:19

An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a
dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not
be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the
child conceived in her is from the Holy
Spirit.”

— Matthew 1:20

This section, like the previous two, serves to present essential information in order to understand the context of patristic oneirology. This will be achieved by probing the biblical dream tradition, which directly fostered patristic dream theory and language. It analyses the biblical dream texts, including those in the Old Testament, the deuterocanonical books and the New Testament. The dream texts in the Bible are much fewer than those in Greco-Roman literature, yet the former offers views of the nature of dreams no less diverse than the latter.¹

In the biblical tradition, dreams were the connection between the temporal

¹ Unlike Greco-Roman writers, biblical writers mention neither dream typology nor dream theory. Nor did they show preference for a certain dream classification known in the ancient world. Hence, this section does not discuss this issue. Modern scholars have categorised the biblical dreams into different types, see Oppenheim, *Interpretation*, 184-217; Jean-Marie Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World* (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 99-103.

world and the divine realm. God utilised them as an instrument to assault dreamers in order to convert their evil deeds into good, and also as a medium of revelation to disclose the divine will. Dreams could also be the site where epiphany takes place. Moreover, they could transmit divine messages, prophesy future events, as well as give strength to reinforce the faith of God's people. On the other hand, not every biblical author viewed dreams in a positive way. Some regarded them as vacuous things or phenomena, while others considered them to be heretical seduction which led people astray from God.

1. Dreams as Vanity

Dreams which originated with dreamers themselves were portrayed by some biblical authors as transient, illusory and useless things or experiences. Job 20:8, for example, obviously presupposes or implies the ephemeral and futile nature of dreams. Ecclesiastes 5:3-7 proclaims, "For dreams (חֲלֹמִים)² come with many cares, and a fool's voice with many words... With many dreams come vanities and a multitude of words; but fear God."³ This pericope expresses a negative attitude towards the dreams derived from dreamers themselves, which present only the anxiety and distress of the dreamers.

Isaiah 29:8 states, "Just as when a hungry person dreams of eating and wakes up still hungry, or a thirsty person dreams of drinking and wakes up faint, still thirsty, so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against Mount Zion." The author

² The terms for dream in the entire Hebrew Bible are either חֲלֹמִים (n.) or חֶלֶם (v.) and in the deuterocanonical books and the New Testament mostly ὄναρ (in Matt and Acts) with a few examples of ὄνειρος (in Wis 18:17,19 and 2 Macc 15:11) or ἐνύπνιον (in Sir 34:2,3,5 and Acts 2:17). The terminology of dreams is consistent in the Bible, unlike that used in Greco-Roman or Hellenistic Jewish literature. See Appendix B for the table of the terms used for dream in the biblical texts.

³ Except as otherwise stated, the biblical texts cited in this thesis are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible.

of this passage basically used the dream phenomenon to characterise those who fight against God's people. Yet this passage not only indicates the ineffectiveness of the Israelite enemy's fighting, but also assumes the futility of dreams. For Shaul Bar, the core idea of Job 20:8, Eccl 5:3-7 or Isa 29:7-8 is that there is nothing substantial in dreams, which are merely human "fleeting experiences".⁴

Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 34:2-3 cautions that "[as] one who catches at a shadow and pursues the wind, so is anyone who believes in dreams (ἐνύπνια). What is seen in dreams is but a reflection, the likeness of a face looking at itself." Either the hope offered by dreams or the fear raised by them was absolutely groundless. The writer, therefore, concludes that dreams are unreal and fanciful (Sir 34:5-6).

In several biblical texts, dream phenomena are employed as a negative metaphor for something ephemeral or vacuous. These texts reflect their authors' perception that human-inspired dreams are illusions and vanity. God's people should be suspicious of the dreams.

2. Dreams as Heretical Seduction

The writers of Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, Zechariah and Sirach greet dreams with total incredulity in certain situations. They condemn those dreams which give false prophecy or can lead to heresy, as well as those dreamers who deceitfully claim to have divinely-inspired dreams or practice pagan divination by dreams.

According to Deut 13:1-5, if a dreamer advises the Israelites to follow other gods or speaks treason against the Lord, the dreamer must be put to death, even if the portent or prophecy announced by the dreamer takes place. The authority of a dreamer correlates not with whether his dream messages are true or will come true,

⁴ Shaul Bar, *A Letter That Has Not Been Read* (Hebrew Union College Press, 2001), 124-129.

but whether or not they are congruent with Yahwism. All dreams alleged by those who seduce God's people into sharing pagan teachings ought to be totally rejected.

The author of Jeremiah 23:32, 27:9 and 29:8-9 deplored the dreams which were ostensibly prophetic but actually deceptive. He also denounced the dreamers who were prophesying in the name of God yet whose dreams were neither sent from nor inspired by the divine at all. Moreover, he equated the dreamers with false prophets and those who practiced dream divination, which had been prohibited in ancient Israel but had prevailed in pagan cultures, both in the Greco-Roman world and the ancient Near East.⁵ By so doing, he more easily incited the Israelites to rebuff the dreamers and their messages as heretical.

Jeremiah's harsh criticism of dreams and dreamers was not unique among the prophets. Zechariah attributed the suffering of God's people wandering like sheep to the diviners and the dreamers who had told false eudaemonistic messages and empty consolation. Those dreamers were tagged as deceitful shepherds, and their messages as seductive (Zech 10:2-3).

The writer of Sirach remarked, "Divinations and omens and dreams are unreal, and like a woman in labor, the mind has fantasies. Unless they are sent by intervention from the Most High, pay no attention to them. For dreams have deceived many, and those who put their hope in them have perished." The writer even blamed the unfulfillment of the law on the deception of dreams (Sir 34:5-8).

⁵ It is evident that the practice of divination (including dream divination) was banned outright in the ancient Israelite community, according to the biblical passages Lev 19:26, 1 Sam 15:23, 2 Kgs 17:17, 21:6, 2 Chr 33:6, Isa 2:6, Ezek 13:23, and in particular Deut 18:9-14. However, Cryer argues that dream divination was a legitimate cultic in ancient Israel. Zeitlin even remarks that "the Bible considered dreams as acts of divination." Frederick Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 229-241, 263-266; Solomon Zeitlin, "Dreams and Their Interpretation from Biblical Period to Tannaitic Time," in *JQR*, Vol. 66 (1975): 1-4. It seems that certain types of divination were perhaps accepted in some periods or by some biblical writers. Yet the biblical tradition overall regards the practice of divination as a pagan cult, and expresses a negative attitude towards it, if not totally condemning it.

In the Bible, the condemnation of dreams or dream messages is targeted at those which are claimed to have divine origin but in fact originate from sources other than the divine, or those which lead God's people to apostasy. Genuine dream prophecy is attested to by its message's faithfulness to Yahwism, rather than its fulfilled prediction. Dreams are also regarded as heretical seduction when they are associated with pagan practices (e.g. divination) or when their messages disaccord with those in the Yahweh faith.

3. Dreams as an Instrument of Divine Assault

Some biblical dream texts illustrate that people are assaulted by the divine through dreams. Dreams are used as "instruments of terror."⁶ Job, for example, is horrified by dreams sent from God (Job 7:14). Elihu explains to Job that dreams can be exploited by the divine in order to frighten people with good intentions. If people do not notice what God speaks, then in their dreams God will open their ears and terrify them with warnings in order to turn them from wrongdoing, keep them from pride, and spare their souls from the Pit (Job 33:15-18).

Sirach 40:5-7 sketches that the wicked are greatly troubled by dreams, like those who have escaped from the battlefield without peace of mind. Wisdom of Solomon 18:13-19, a passage in a midrash on the captivity of the Israelites in Egypt, depicts that the Egyptians, the enemy of God's people, were greatly disturbed by dreadful dreams in which unexpected fears assailed them. Those dreams also forewarned them of the reason why they were going to suffer and perish. Albrecht Oepke has labeled the dreams in Sirach 40:5-7 and Wisdom of Solomon 18:17-19

⁶ John F. Priest, "Myth and Dreams in Hebrew Scripture," in *Myths, Dreams, and Religion*, ed. by Joseph Campbell (NY: MJF Books, 2000), 62.

which assault the ungodly as the divine “messengers of judgment.”⁷

According to the biblical passages noted above, God may exert dreams as a tool to terrify humanity for the purpose of saving them. Hence, dreams can be viewed as an instrument of divine assault against dreamers.

4. Dreams as a Site of Epiphany

The biblical tradition has held the tenet that humanity is unable to see, or make contact with, the divinity directly (Exod 33:20). People cannot meet God in the same way they meet others. Nonetheless, dreams make the divine-human encounter possible and permissible. When the divine appears in a person’s dream, that dream enables the person to see and contact the divine directly. The dream also becomes a site where epiphany takes place. At least two biblical passages in the Hebrew Bible expressly speak of dreams as a site of epiphany.

Jacob at Bethel dreamed of a ladder which connected the earth and heaven, and on which the angels of God were ascending and descending.⁸ Then the Lord appeared and spoke to Jacob. Jacob therefore saw the Lord and heard His voice directly in the dream. Jacob awakened and said with awe that the Lord had actually been present at the site where the dream occurred. He then named the place Bethel, the House of God (Gen 28:10-22). According to the biblical text, the place, which used to be called Luz, had never intrinsically been sacred. It was the dream, the locale of divine self-manifestation, that endowed the place with the sacred essence and meaning, and thus consecrated it.

⁷ Albrecht Oepke, “ὄναρ,” in *TDNT* Vol. V. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 231.

⁸ Flannery-Dailey argues that the ladder in this dream can be seen as “a symbol that bridges earth and heaven, signifying that the divine realm is accessible from earth.” Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 40.

The other dream theophany was experienced by King Solomon. The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices on the altar. By night the Lord appeared to the king in a dream and said to him, “Ask what I should give you.” Being pleased with his answer, the Lord then rendered the divine gifts as well as divine promise to him in the dream (1 Kings 3:3-15).⁹

Like their contemporaries in Greece, Rome and the ancient Near East, “Israelites used the dream report in stereotypical fashion to respectfully describe a divine theophany.”¹⁰ Two biblical passages have witnessed the manifestation of the divine in people’s dreams.¹¹ They evidently present the aspect of dreams as a site of epiphany. However, unlike the narratives of dream epiphany in Greco-Roman texts, many of which portray the divine image or countenance (e.g. as marvelously handsome), the narratives in biblical texts include no attempt to depict the physical appearance of the divine.¹² Instead, they describe the awestruck reactions of the dreamers to epiphany, and its profound effect on them.

5. Dreams as Divine Messages

Most biblical dreams function mainly to relay divine messages. Although

⁹ The pericope of the epiphany in Solomon’s dream has provoked a debate among scholars on the practice of dream incubation. Some (e.g. Ehrlich and Oppenheim) argue that the passage gives a clear example of the existence of such a rite in ancient Israel, while others (e.g. Husser) contend that the text does not explicitly refer to the practice. Ernst L. Ehrlich, *Der Traum im Alten Testament*, 19-26. A. Leo Oppenheim, *Interpretation*, 188. Jean-Marie Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World*, 172-174. C. L. Seow, “The Syro-Palestinian Context of Solomon’s Dream.” In *HTR*, Vol.77, No. 2. (1984)146.

¹⁰ Gnuse, *Dream Reports*, 68.

¹¹ In addition to these two passages, according to Oppenheim, 1 Sam 3:10 can be viewed as another account of dream epiphany, although the text does not explicitly say that the divine appears in the dream. Oppenheim, *Interpretation*, 189. For an elaborate work on Samuel’s dream, see Gnuse, *The Dream Theophany of Samuel* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984).

¹² Bar, *Letter*, 16.

several biblical dream messages emanated from an angel or some unknown source,¹³ they were all germane to divine messages. Dreams were utilised as vehicles of divine messages or as venues where divine messages could be spoken and heard. The dream messages were always significant, not only for the dreamers, but also for their families, their descendants or their community of faith.

a. Dream Messages from the Divine

Most message dreams in the Bible originate with the divine. Their messages often impart divine sanction, promise, reassurance or guidance for people. In Genesis,¹⁴ Abimelech received a message from God in his dream through which he learned the truth about the hidden relationship between Abraham and Sarah as well as God's command to return Abraham's wife (Gen 20:3-7). Through a dream, God gave Jacob His covenant and promises concerning him and his offspring (Gen 28:13-15). In addition, when Jacob was frustrated with Laban's attitude towards him, which was not what it had been previously, God instructed Jacob in a dream in how

¹³ Biblical texts do not contain any dreams, or dream messages, inspired by the dead or demons, while Greco-Roman literature contains many.

¹⁴ Every dream in Genesis can be seen as a message from God. Dreams in Genesis may be classified into two types: the auditory message dreams (e.g. Gen 20:3, 28:12-15, 31:10-13, 24), in which the divine delivers auditory messages in plain language, and the visual symbolic dreams (e.g. Gen 37:5-10, 40:5 ff, 41: 1 ff), in which the dreamers witness enigmatic visual images that, in most cases (except Joseph's dream), require an interpreter with the aid of God to decipher the hidden messages in the dreams. The symbolic dreams seemingly may not be a message, as the dreamers themselves even do not know the messages or their meanings at all. However, because the symbolic dreams still carry messages (which are all eventually known by dreamers through an interpreter), only through a different way, they too should be viewed as messages. Consequently, dreams in Genesis, whether they are presented by comprehensible messages or by enigmatic symbols, can all be regarded as messages from God. For discussion, see Jean-Marie Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World*, 99-104. However, since God intended to send people messages, why in some cases did He give them symbolic or hidden dream messages, rather than unequivocal ones? It seems that God orchestrated the dream-events in order to create the opportunities for the dream interpreters (i. e. Joseph and Daniel) to be elevated politically in the foreign lands by their correct interpretations (inspired by God) of the symbolic dreams. See Gen 40, 41 and Dan 2, 4. Also Claus Westermann, *Joseph: Studies of the Joseph Stories in Genesis* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 43-60; Bar, *Letter*, 70-77, 190-198; Gordon Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 16-50* (TN: Nelson, 1994), 395-400. For discussion of biblical symbolic dreams, their sources, purposes and contextual implications, see Susan Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision in Biblical Tradition* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983).

to procure better yields from his flocks and commanded him to go back to his birth land (Gen 31:10-13). It was also by dreams that God warned Laban (Gen 31:24), conveyed essential messages to Pharaoh (Gen 41:1-32), and gave divine sanction to the aged Jacob (Gen 46:1-4).

1 Samuel 28:6 says, “When Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, not by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets.” This description indicates that one of the common ways for God to transmit His messages or guidance to the king was by dreams. But because Saul had incurred God’s displeasure, God did not speak to him by any means. Through a dream Solomon obtained the divine promise that he would have the wisdom bestowed by God (1 Kgs 3:5-14). Paul at Troas dreamed of a pleading Macedonian man. He and his travelling companion were convinced by this dream, which was regarded by them as God’s call, to immediately launch the mission to Europe (Acts 16:9-10).

b. Dream Messages from the Angels

The divine also dispatches messengers to deliver messages through dreams. Genesis 31:10-16 describes that the angel of God granted a divine instruction to Jacob in his dream. In the Gospel of Matthew, through a dream message related by an angel of the Lord, Joseph not only recognised the divine identity of his wife’s child, but was also commanded to name the child Jesus (Matt 1:18-25). Following the direction in a dream sent by an angel of the Lord, Joseph took Jesus and his mother and fled to Egypt (Matt 2:13-15). Advised by another dream message, they then went back to the land of Israel after the death of Herod (Matt 2:19-21). The message in those dreams helped Joseph to know what he should do at that crucial moment.

c. Dream Messages from an Unknown Source

The Gospel of Matthew provides three examples whereby people received

messages through dreams which came from some unknown source. In the first instance, after seeing Jesus and offering him gifts, the magi were notified in a dream not to return to Herod. They then left for their own country by another road (Matt 2:12).

Similarly, when Joseph heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Subsequently, a dream instructed him to take his child and withdraw to Nazareth (Matt 2:21-22). It was this dream message that eventually guided Joseph's family to Nazareth, and enabled the identity of Jesus as a Nazorean to be confirmed; accordingly what had been said through the prophets was fulfilled. The final example is that while Pilate was examining Jesus, his wife requested Pilate to have nothing to do with Jesus, for she had had a dream in which she suffered because of him (Matt 27:19).

According to the Bible, the divine intervenes in significant human affairs through dreams, and directs their development through dream messages. Some biblical oneiric messages direct or reassure the dreamers when they are in predicaments. Others illuminate divine providence and sanction for central figures in Scripture. Still others demand the prompt response and obedience of the dreamers to the divine will. The biblical message dreams can virtually be seen not as "dreams but divine speech" addressed to, or concerning, God's chosen people.¹⁵

6. Dreams as a Mode of Divine Revelation

The modes of divine revelation in the Bible vary from external phenomena (e.g. voices and forces of nature) to internal phenomena (e.g. visions and dreams). Dreams are one of the legitimate channels through which God reveals the divine will,

¹⁵ Benno Jacob, *The First Book of the Bible: Genesis* (NY: Ktav, 1974, new edition, 2007), 250.

words or extraordinary knowledge unknown to people.

In Genesis, God's will is disclosed to Jacob and Laban by dreams (Gen 28:12-15, 31:11-16, 31:24). Additionally, it is stated that "God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do (Gen 41:25b)." In light of these biblical dream narratives, Jean-Michel de Tarragon argues that ordinary prophecy could always benefit from revelation through dreams. Examples of this include the dream of Jacob at Bethel, and the dreams that Joseph interpreted for his companions in captivity and for Pharaoh.¹⁶

From the dream narratives in Genesis, scholars have deduced aspects of the theological agenda of the biblical writers concerning revelation. For example, Hermann Gunkel remarks, "E [the Elohist source] prefers dreams and the call of the angel from heaven—the most invisible means of revelation."¹⁷ Adolph Oppenheim has also observed that the majority of dream-stories in Genesis, as well as in the Hebrew Bible, appear in the materials attributed to the Elohist source.¹⁸ Based on Oppenheim's observation, Gnuse contends that in the Elohist text God remains distant from humanity, while demanding fear and obedience as human responses. This aura of transcendence may inspire the Elohist to use dreams as an indirect "form of revelation which assumes a distance, transcendent deity unlike the very anthropomorphic style of revelation found in the Yahwist."¹⁹

Moreover, Numbers 12:6 states, "I the Lord make myself known to them in

¹⁶ Jean-Michel de Tarragon, "Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination in Canaan and Ancient Israel," in *Civilization of the Near East*, Vol. III. Ed. by Jack Sasson (NY: Charles Scribner's Son, 1995), 2072.

¹⁷ Hermann Gunkel, *Die Sagen der Genesis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910), trans. by John J. Scullion, *The Stories of Genesis* (TX, North Richland Hill: Bibal, 1994), 101.

¹⁸ Oppenheim, *Interpretation*, 187.

¹⁹ Gnuse, "Dreams and their Theological Significance in the Biblical Tradition," in *CTM*, 8 no 3 (Je 1981), 169, and "Dream Genre in the Matthean Infancy Narratives." In *NovT*, Vol. 32, Fasc. 2. (Apr., 1990), 118, and "Dreams in the Night" In *BZ*, 39. No. 1 (1995), 30-31.

visions; I speak to them in dreams.” From this passage, Oepke argues that in the Priestly source, dream “is a current mode of receiving revelation.”²⁰ The narrative of Numbers 22:8-20 also indicates that through dreams Balaam learned God’s will and words for the Moabites.

In the second year of Darius, the Lord disclosed things to come through a nocturnal revelatory vision given to the prophet Zechariah (Zech 1:7-6:15). According to the Gospel of Matthew, the name of Jesus and the beliefs of Jesus’ miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and Mary’s virgin birth were all first unveiled in a dream by the angel of the Lord (Matt 1:18-25).

In short, God may impart divine will and words by dreams, just as He may through prophets. To the Israelites, dreams were the legitimate revelatory mode, despite not being as authoritative as the mode through God’s prophets. Dreams in the biblical tradition can be deemed as a medium of divine revelation.

7. Dreams as Prophecy

In Scripture, dreams can prophesy through their messages or foreshadow through their images, forthcoming events. They play a significant role in the formation and development of several biblical narratives, particularly those in Genesis. As Leibowitz has noted, “Either they depict the future, or they cause future events.”²¹

The two dreams of the boy Joseph intimated his future greatness (Gen 37:5-11). When many years later the dream prediction came true, the memory of

²⁰ Oepke, “ὄναρ,” 230.

²¹ Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *Notes to the Weekly Tora Reading* (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Academion), 33; cited and translated by Ariel Knafo and Tziporit Glick in “Genesis Dreams” in *Dreaming* Vol. 10, No. 1 (2000), 19.

those dreams came back to Joseph, and he then realised that those dreams were prophetic (Gen 42:9). Both the cupbearer and the baker of the Pharaoh had symbolic-mantic dreams which were decoded by Joseph, who prognosticated what would happen to them in three days (Gen 40:1-23). Genesis 41:15-32 portrays Pharaoh's premonitory dream, which indicated the coming of great abundance and famine in Egypt.

God transmitted a message through an enigmatic dream to King Nebuchadnezzar in the second year of his reign, presaging the future of his kingdom in the latter days, which was interpreted comprehensibly by Daniel. Accordingly, Daniel asserted to the gentile King that there was a God in heaven who reveals what will take place by dreams (Dan 2:1-45). By the divine inspired interpretation of another obscure dream, again voiced by Daniel, the king foreknew that he would be driven away from human society and would dwell with the wild animals until he learned that the Most High had sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals. After the fulfillment of this dream prophecy, Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed the Most High the sovereign King (Dan 4:4-37). Daniel saw in his dream a symbolic vision, which was unraveled in the same dream, foretelling that the four kings and their kingdoms would arise out of the earth and then be totally destroyed, and finally that the everlasting kingship and dominion under the whole heaven would be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High (Dan 7:1-28).

By a nocturnal vision the Lord imparted what would happen, mainly concerning the rebuilding of the temple of the Lord and the re-prosperity of Jerusalem, to the prophet Zechariah (Zech 1:7-6:15). The Additions to Esther begins with Mordecai's dream, a mantic symbolic dream in which he saw two dragons and a tiny spring that later became a great river, wherein light came and the sun rose.

Mordecai, while dreaming, already knew that this dream foreshadowed “what God had determined to do” although he did not comprehend its meanings and what would really take place until its prediction was fulfilled, that is, the Jews destroyed their enemies by God’s wonder acts through Mordecai, symbolised as one of the dragons, and Esther, represented as the great river in the dream (Add Esth 11:2-12, 10:4-13).

Many of the biblical narratives discussed above have testified to the predictive power of dreams. Dreams were exercised by the divine as a means to foreshadow what would happen in the future. Therefore, from the biblical perspective, dreams can be regarded as prophecy.

8. Dreams as Reinforcement of Faith

In the Bible, before the fulfillment of the divine promise, God often speaks to His people in many and various ways, in order to strengthen their faith and give them hope. Indeed, the people need divine signs or messages to enhance their faith, especially in very difficult situations. Dreams, along with the pillar of cloud or fire, miracles, visions and the like, all serve as instrumental agents to reinforce the faith of God’s people. Without them, the people may lose their hope, forsake their faith or go astray from the way of God.

Both the authors of Joel and the Acts of the Apostles maintain that, “God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams...before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-20).” That is, both of them regard the dreams (of the old men) as a sign which will occur before the advent of the Lord and which reminds God’s

people that the fulfillment of the divine promise is very near. In this sense, dreams (or their occurrences) are able to strengthen the faith of God's people and help to turn their eyes towards the hope of divine promise, rather than their current predicament.

Judges 7:9-15 provides a detailed example of how God reinforces the strength of His people's faith through a dream (although this dream is given to their enemy). Gideon feared to fight against the large army composed by Midianites, the Amalekites, and other eastern peoples. The Lord then said to him, "if you fear to attack, go down to the [enemy's] camp...., and you shall hear what they say, and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to attack the camp." Following the divine instruction, Gideon heard the telling of a dream and its interpretation in the camp, from which he derived faith and also knew that the Lord would deliver the enemy into the Israelite people's hands. He was therefore spurred to attack the enemy and eventually won the battle.

The last chapter of 2 Maccabees narrates that before the decisive moment of the battle between the Jews and the Nicanor's army, Judas Maccabees had a dream in which he saw the former high priest Onias and the prophet Jeremiah. In the dream Onias was praying with outstretched hands for the whole body of the Jews, and then Jeremiah gave Judas a golden sword and said to him, "Take this holy sword, a gift from God, with which you will strike down your adversaries." Afterwards, Judas exhorted his troops "all by relating the dream." Encouraged by the dream message, "so effective in arousing valor and awaking courage in the souls" of the Jews, Judas' troops finally defeated the much larger army of Nicanor, and praised the Sovereign Lord in the language of their ancestors (2 Macc 15:11-29).

Acts 18:9-10 reports that the Lord in a nocturnal vision encouraged Paul to preach the gospel to the Corinthians without fear, for the Lord would be with him,

and no one would harm him. After this dream, Paul then stayed at Corinth for one and a half years, spreading the word of God. On another two occasions, the Lord also by dreams gave Paul consolation and strength in the face of great adversity (Acts 23:11 and 27:23-25).

Bart Koet, from the passages 2 Maccabees 15, Acts 18:9-10 and Acts 27: 24, has observed that through dreams God demonstrated to Judas an assurance of victory and to Paul an assurance of divine guidance and protection in his Gentile mission.²² The dreams thus played a crucial role in both the successful Jewish rebellion and Paul's Gentile mission.

From the dream narratives described above, we may observe that when people receive dreams from God, their faith is stronger and their hope raised; they are then capable of enduring severe hardship in their lives. Hence, dreams can be viewed as reinforcement by which the divine strengthens and enhances people's faith in God and the divine promise.

Conclusion

According to the Scripture, the dreams derived from humans are either of insignificance or dangerous. Ephemerality and vanity were the charges of some biblical writers towards human-inspired dreams. Others even aroused enmity towards dreams. They did not condemn outright all types of dreams, but those which seduce God's people into following pagan belief.

While several biblical texts sharply criticise dreams, the remainder express a preference for them. Scott Noegel remarks, "In nearly every case the [biblical] text uses a dream to demonstrate God's creative hand in Israelite history and to bolster

²² Bart J. Koet, *Dreams and Scripture in Luke-Acts* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 16, 36.

and contrast a biblical figure's character and abilities,..."²³ Indeed, through dreams, biblical figures receive divine messages, revelation, prophecies or encouragement, which is able to strengthen their faith, especially when they experience serious difficulties. They even encountered the divine manifestation in dreams. Moreover, dreams appeared at the turning points of the lives of several patriarchs (e.g. Abraham, Jacob and Joseph) as well as the infant Jesus and Paul. For the biblical dream figures, such as Jacob, Joseph and Daniel, they were in dreams, and dreams were in them. Dreams oriented their lives and fates.

Furthermore, in the Bible, demonic power or traces entirely disappear in the realm of dreams. It is only the divine who can utilise dreams, sometimes even using them to assault humanity with good intentions. Biblical dreams, unlike those in Greco-Roman literature, remain solely in the domain of divinity, and relate closely to faith, but never to myth or philosophy. To sum up, from the biblical perspective, the nature of dreams can be viewed as vanity, as heretical seduction, as an instrument of divine assault, as a site of epiphany, as divine messages, as a mode of divine revelation, as prophecy or as reinforcement of faith.

²³ Scott Noegel, "Dreams and Dream Interpretations in Mesopotamia and in the Hebrew Bible," in *Dreams*. Ed. by Kelly Bulkeley (NY: Palgrave, 2001), 56.

Appendix C Table of Dreams in the Biblical Texts

| The Old Testament | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Text | Recipient | Source | Terminology | Nature of the Dream as |
| Genesis | | | | |
| 15:12-21 | Abraham | the Lord | (מַלְאָכִים) | (Messages from the Divine) |
| 20:3-7 | Abimelech | God | (n.) מַלְאָכִים (from מַלְאָכִים) | Messages from the Divine |
| 26:24 | Isaac | The Lord | (מַלְאָכִים מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם וּמִן הָאָרֶץ) | (Site of Epiphany), (Messages from the Divine) |
| 28:10-22 | Jacob | The Lord | (v.) מַלְאָכִים (from מַלְאָכִים) | Site of Epiphany, Messages from the Divine, Mode of Divine Revelation. |
| 31:10-13 | Jacob | God or the Angel of God | (n.) מַלְאָכִים (from מַלְאָכִים) | Messages from the Divine, Messages from the Angel, Mode of Divine Revelation. |
| 31:24 | Laban | God | (n.) מַלְאָכִים (from מַלְאָכִים) | Messages from the Divine, Mode of Divine Revelation. |
| 37:5-8 | Joseph | (unknown) | (n.) מַלְאָכִים (from מַלְאָכִים) | Prophecy |
| 37:9-10 | Joseph | (unknown) | (n.) מַלְאָכִים (from מַלְאָכִים) | Prophecy |

| | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|--|--|
| 37:19-20 | (no content of dreams) | (no content) | (n.) הַחֲלֹמִים (from חָלַם) | (N/A) |
| 40:1-22 | the cupbearer & the baker | (unknown) | (n.) הַחֲלֹמִים (from חָלַם) | Prophecy |
| 41:1-45 | Pharaoh | God | (v.) חָלַם (from חָלַם) (n.) הַחֲלֹמִים (from חָלַם) | Messages from the Divine, Mode of Divine Revelation, Prophecy. |
| 42:9 | (no content) | (no content) | (n.) הַחֲלֹמִים (from חָלַם) | (N/A) |
| 46:1-5 | (aged) Jacob | God | (n.) מִן הַחֲלֹמִים (from חָלַם) | Messages from the Divine |
| Numbers | | | | |
| 12:6-8 | prophets | the Lord | (n.) הַחֲלֹמִים (from חָלַם) | Messages from the Divine, Mode of Divine Revelation. |
| 22:8-21 | Balaam | God | (n.) אֱלֹהִים אֶל־בְּלָעָם לֵאמֹר (n.) | Messages from the Divine, Mode of Divine Revelation. |
| Deuteronomy | | | | |
| 13:1-6 | false prophets | (dreamer self) | (v.) חָלַם (from חָלַם) (n.) הַחֲלֹמִים (from חָלַם) | Heretic Seduction |
| 23:10-12 | (no content) | (no content) | (n.) לֹא־יִהְיֶה פְּהִיזֵר מִקְּדֹשֵׁי לֵוִי (n.) | (N/A) |
| Judges | | | | |

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------------------------|--|
| 7:13-15 | A Midianite man | the Lord | (n.) הָלֵלִים (from הָלַל) | Messages from the Divine, Reinforcement of Faith. |
| 1 Samuel | | | | |
| 3:2-18 | Samuel | God | (n.) הָלֵלִים (from הָלַל) | Site of Epiphany, Messages from the Divine. |
| 28:6 | (no content) | (no content) | (n.) הָלֵלִים (from הָלַל) | Messages from the Divine |
| 1 Kings | | | | |
| 3:5-15 | Solomon | the Lord | (n.) הָלֵלִים (from הָלַל) | Site of Epiphany, Messages from the Divine. |
| Additions to Esther (Greek) | | | | |
| 11:2-12 | Mordecai | God | (n.) ἐνύπνιον | Prophecy |
| 10:4-13 | Mordecai | God | (n.) ἐνύπνιον (from ἐνύπνιον) | Prophecy |
| Job | | | | |
| 4:12-21 | (no content) | (no content) | (n.) הָלֵלִים (from הָלַל) | (N/A) |
| 7:13-14 | Job | God | (n.) הָלֵלִים (from הָלַל) | Instrument of Divine Assault |
| 20:8 | (no content) | (no content) | (n.) הָלֵלִים (from הָלַל) | Vanity |
| 33:15-17 | People | God | (n.) הָלֵלִים (from הָלַל) | Instrument of Divine Assault |

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|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|---|-------------------|
| Psalms | | | | |
| 73:20 | (no content) | (no content) | (n.) מַלְאִים (from מַלְאָךְ) | (Metaphor) |
| 126:1 | (no content) | (no content) | (v.) מַלְאֵי מָוֶן (from מַלְאָךְ) | (Metaphor) |
| Ecclesiastes | | | | |
| 5:3 | (no content) | (no content) | (n.) מַלְאִים רִיקִים (from מַלְאָךְ) | Vanity |
| 5:7 | (no content) | (no content) | (n.) מַלְאֵי רִיקָה (from מַלְאָךְ) | Vanity |
| Isaiah | | | | |
| 29:7-8 | (no content) | (no content) | (n.) מַלְאִים בְּרִיקִים (from מַלְאָךְ) | Vanity |
| Jeremiah | | | | |
| 23:25-32 | false prophets | (dreamer self) | (v.) מַלְאֵי חֲלֹמִים (from מַלְאָךְ) (n.) מַלְאֵי חֲלֹמִים / מַלְאֵי חֲלֹמִים (from מַלְאָךְ) | Heretic Seduction |
| 27:9-10 | (no content) | (no content) | (מַלְאֵי חֲלֹמִים = dreamers) | Heretic Seduction |
| 29:8-9 | false prophets | (dreamer self) | (n.) מַלְאֵי חֲלֹמִים רִיקִים (from מַלְאָךְ) (v.) מַלְאֵי חֲלֹמִים (from מַלְאָךְ) | Heretic Seduction |
| Daniel | | | | |
| 2:1-49 | Nebuchadnezzar | God | (v.) מַלְאֵי חֲלֹמִים (from מַלְאָךְ) | Prophecy |
| 4:4-37 | Nebuchadnezzar | God | (n.) מַלְאֵי חֲלֹמִים (from מַלְאָךְ) | Prophecy |

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| 7:1-28 | Daniel | (unknown) | (n.) מֵלֵךְ (from מֶלֶךְ) | Prophecy |
| Joel | | | | |
| 2:28 | the old men | the Spirit | (v.) מְלָכִים (from מֶלֶךְ) (n.) מְלָכִים (from מֶלֶךְ) | Reinforcement of Faith |
| Zechariah | | | | |
| 1:7-6:15 | Zechariah | the Lord | (מֵלֵךְ מְלָכִים) | Messages from the Divine, Mode of Divine Revelation, Prophecy. |
| 10:2 | dreamers | (dreamer self) | (n.) מְלָכִים (from מֶלֶךְ) | Heretic Seduction |

The Deuterocanonical Books

| Text | Recipient | Source | Terminology | Nature of the Dream |
|--------------------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) | | | | |
| 34:1-8 | dreamers | (dreamer self) | (n.) ἐνύπνιον (from ἐνύπνιος) | Vanity, Heretic Seduction. |
| 40:5-7 | dreamers | (dreamer self) | (n.) ὄρασις (from ὄρασις) | Instrument of Divine Assault |
| Wisdom | | | | |

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|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 18:17-19 | (no content) | (no content) | (n.) ὄνειροι (from ὄνειρος) | Instrument of Divine Assault |
| 2 Maccabees | | | | |
| 15:11-16 | Judas Maccabees | (unknown) | (n.) ὄνειρον (from ὄνειρος) | Reinforcement of Faith |

The New Testament

| Text | Recipient | Source | Terminology | Nature of the Dream |
|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--|--|
| Matthew | | | | |
| 1:20 | Joseph | Angel of the Lord | (n.) ὄναρ | Messages from the Angel, Mode of Divine Revelation. |
| 2:12 | magi | (unknown) | (n.) ὄναρ | Messages from Unknown Source |
| 2:13-15 | Joseph | Angel of the Lord | (n.) ὄναρ | Messages from the Angel |
| 2:19-21 | Joseph | Angel of the Lord | (n.) ὄναρ | Messages from the Angel |
| 2:22 | Joseph | (unknown) | (n.) ὄναρ | Messages from Unknown Source |
| 27:19 | Pilate's wife (female) | (unknown) | (n.) ὄναρ | Messages from Unknown Source |
| Acts | | | | |
| 2:17 | the old men | the Spirit | (v.) ἐνυπνιασθήσονται (from ἐνυπνιάζομαι) | Reinforcement of Faith |

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|-------|------|-------------------|---|--|
| | | | (n.) ἐνυπνίους (from ἐνύπνιον) | |
| 16:9 | Paul | (God) | (n.) ὄραμα | Messages from the Divine |
| 18:9 | Paul | the Lord | ὁράματος (from ὄραμα) | Messages from the Divine, Reinforcement of Faith. |
| 23:11 | Paul | the Lord | (Τῇ δὲ ἐπιούσῃ νυκτὶ ἐπιστάς αὐτῷ ὁ κύριος εἶπεν) | Messages from the Divine, Reinforcement of Faith. |
| 27:23 | Paul | Angel of the Lord | (παρέστη γάρ μοι παύτη τῇ νυκτὶ τοῦ θεοῦ...λέγων,) | Messages from the Angel, Reinforcement of Faith. |

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